The Life of St. Francis de Sales

REV. HAROLD BURTON

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The Life of St Francis de Sales

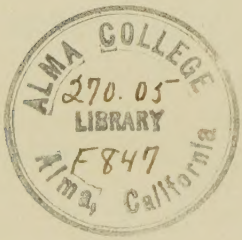
Adapted from the

Abbé Hamon's Vie de S François de Sales

By the

REV. HAROLD BURTON

VOLUME II



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Bénite Fontaine
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St Sixt
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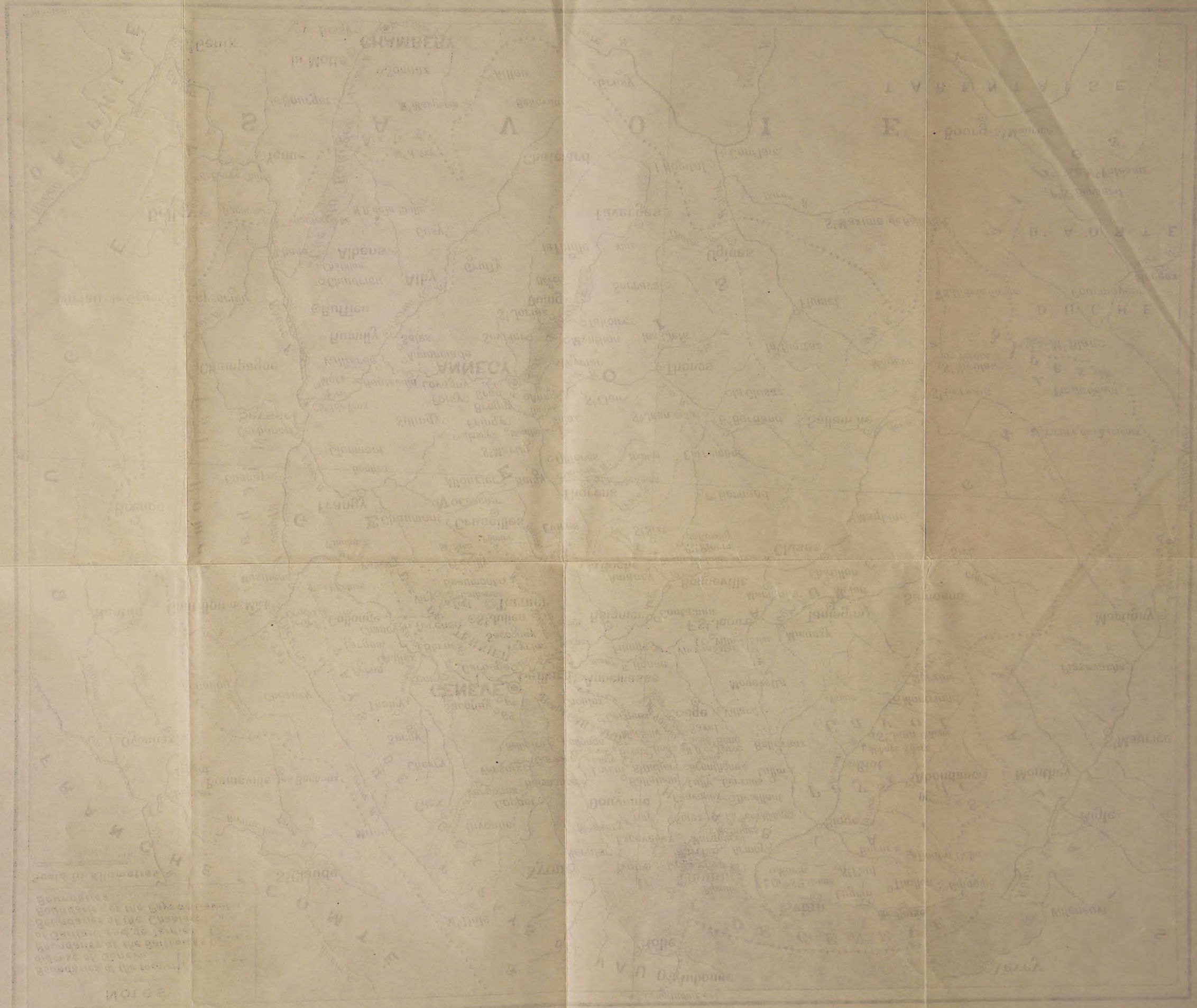

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CHAPTER I*
(1610)

Origin of the Visitation Order

ONE of the most important works which Francis de Sales accomplished during the years of his episcopacy was the foundation of the Institute of the Visitation. We have already seen that the Saint had received from Almighty God a vision by which he was assured that he was one day to become the founder of a new order. He was well aware that there was great need for such a foundation. He knew of the existence of many souls who wished to devote themselves to God in a more complete manner than was possible for those living ordinary lives in the world. And he knew also that there was practically no means by which these souls could attain to the accomplishment of their desires. Owing to the disastrous consequences of the religious wars, many of the ancient religious houses had fallen into a lamentable state of laxity. Those which still maintained their discipline were unsuited for the needs of the people of whom St Francis was thinking. They professed, and indeed practised, a severe external austerity, observed rigid laws of fasting, spent a great deal of their time in long vocal prayer and the recitation of Office, and led a life beyond the powers of any who did not possess considerable strength and a robust constitution. Francis wished to found a congregation which, while mitigating the rigour thus exercised against the body, would be none the less efficient to lead souls to the most solid perfection in the spiritual life. Later on he was able to write on the first page of the *Visitation Constitutions* that their house had been formed " in order that several generous souls, who ardently desire to withdraw from the turmoil of the world in order to live to God alone, and who cannot take refuge in orders bound to intense corporal penance, by reason of their health or of their age or by reason of the fact that they are not attracted thereby, might find a safe retreat wherein to give themselves up to the perfection of divine love."

" Such," says M. Hamon, " was the real intention of the Founder. He was considerate with regard to bodily health. He would admit widows, and people who were of advanced age or impaired constitution. At the very beginning he was quite willing that some of the sisters should go out each day, under definite conditions, in order to visit the poor and the sick. But of all his postulants he demanded

* Hamon, l. v, chap. 1.

that they should strive towards a certain generosity of virtue and towards that which is most perfectly conformable to the will of God. He would allow no one to be slack in the practice of personal renunciation, humility, and obedience."

In fine, Francis desired to found a congregation of pious women, either maidens or widows, in which the heart and the mind, rather than the body, should undergo a mortification that would be possible for all; in which faults would be corrected and virtues acquired rather by the attraction of love than by the rigour of penance; in which the sisters would give themselves more to mental prayer than to the recitation of long offices, to charity rather than to solitude, to obedience rather than to continued fasts; in which, finally, holiness, all the more solid because it would be an inner sanctity, would be revealed to those outside by no other signs than the practice of gentleness, affability, obligingness, and simplicity.

For a long time, moreover, the Saint had been growing more and more assured that Baroness de Chantal was to play an important part in the foundation of the new order. During the course of some six years he had been guiding her along the path towards perfection, and had been encouraging within her the growth of those qualities which would be essential in his projected institution. Soon after his return from Dijon in 1604, where he had first made the Baroness' acquaintance, he had written her a letter in which he said: "I will never cease to pray to our good God that he will be pleased to perfect his holy work within you, that is to say, the excellent desire and intention of attaining perfection in the Christian life, a desire which you must nourish and cherish lovingly in your heart, as a work of the Holy Spirit and a spark of his divine fire. . . .

"One of the columns of your tabernacle . . . is the love of your widowhood, a holy and desirable love for as many reasons as there are stars in the sky, and without which widowhood is contemptible and false. . . .

"Guard yourself from scruples and place complete confidence in what I said to you by word of mouth, for I said it in our Lord. Keep yourself firmly in the presence of God by those means which you know. Guard yourself from undue eagerness and anxiety, for there is nothing which can hinder you any longer from advancing towards perfection. Place your heart within the wounds of our Saviour gently and not with violence; have the greatest confidence in his mercy and goodness that he will not abandon you, but do not cease on that account to hold fast lovingly to his holy cross."*

This letter brought the deepest consolation to Madame de Chantal and at the same time greatly increased her desire to place herself entirely under the guidance of the Bishop of Geneva. But this very

* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXVI, p. 263.

desire, opposed, as it was, to the engagement which she had made not to leave her first confessor, became the means of inflicting upon her a veritable martyrdom of doubt. Drawn, on the one hand, to what she suspected was the will of God, restrained on the other by the fear of failing to fulfil that will by mistake, she knew not which way to turn. "That word of the will of God," she said, "was like a burning brand which set my soul on fire." Things came to such a pass that at one time the torment of her doubt became so great an agony as to make sleep and food an impossibility to her for several days.

In her anxiety she consulted Father de Villars, the rector of the Jesuits at Dijon, a man of great piety and learning. By him she was assured that it was the will of God that she should give herself up to the guidance of the Bishop of Geneva, under whose conduct Providence destined her to accomplish a great work. This assurance gave her comfort once more, and for a time peace reigned in her heart.

Her first director had been absent from Dijon when she consulted Father de Villars: on his return she informed him fully of what had taken place. He had no objection to her having recourse to the Bishop of Geneva or to her writing to that prelate from time to time, but he still insisted, as a condition of this indulgence, that she should continue to remain, as formerly, under his own personal direction. Once again was she plunged into her original state of doubt, which was still further increased by the advice of a saintly Capuchin friar, to whom she confided her trouble: after much prayer and meditation the good Franciscan ranged himself on the side of Father de Villars and repeated the Jesuit's decision. It was the will of God, he told her, that she should place herself under the conduct of Francis de Sales. Mme. de Chantal communicated these things to her director, and this good man, who was nothing if not decisive, made her no other answer than to impose upon her a renewal of the vow by which she had bound herself to remain under his care. She obeyed his behest, but at the same time thought it well to inform Francis de Sales of this new development. In his answer he strove to quiet her mind and to allay the scruples which were giving her such trouble, at the same time laying down firmly the general law which should govern the relations of director and penitent. "It is expedient," he wrote, "to have but one spiritual father, whose authority must in all things and everywhere be preferred to your own will, and even to the advice of any other person whatsoever: but this should in no way hinder the intercourse and communication of one mind with another, nor the use of advice and counsel which you receive elsewhere." He illustrates this principle by adducing the example of St Teresa. Then he continues: "This is to show you that the principle of having only one spiritual father does not

exclude confidence and communication with another, provided that the promised obedience remains strongly in position and is given preference."* It is probable that at this early stage of their acquaintance the Saint was not sure of the advisability of his assuming the direction of Mme. de Chantal's spiritual life, and that he desired to have more time for reflection and prayer upon so important a matter before making a definite decision. In the meantime anxiety of mind had once again descended upon Mme. de Chantal. She knew in her heart of hearts that she was making little progress in spirituality under the guidance of her director, and that his system of ascetics brought nothing but fatigue and desolation to her soul. In the extremity of her trouble she ventured to have recourse once more to Father de Villars. The Jesuit was a man both of discernment and decision, and he gave her his opinion with emphatic authority: he told her without qualification that she ought to place herself under the guidance of the Bishop, and that, unless she did so, she was manifestly opposing the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. She immediately communicated this advice to Francis de Sales, putting it before him as being, in her opinion, the veritable voice of God. Thereupon the Saint made a partial surrender to her wishes and gave her rendezvous for August 24 at St. Claude, whither he was to accompany his mother on a pilgrimage: there he would confer with her, and, after mature deliberation and prayer, would give her a final, decisive answer.

The meeting thus arranged eventually took place. The Bishop introduced Baroness de Chantal to his mother, and straightway there sprang up between these two chosen souls a friendship that was only ended by the hand of death. With regard to the main object of the appointment, Mme. de Chantal lost no time in putting before the Saint a full and clear account of all that had happened to her in the past few years and of the difficulties with which she was contending. Francis listened to her attentively, and then, without making any decision at the moment, terminated the interview. He devoted the whole of that night to prayer and reflection on the point at issue. Early the next morning he went to see her. "Let us sit down," he said; "I am tired, for I have not slept. I have spent the whole night considering your case, and I think it is certainly the will of God that I should take charge of your spiritual conduct and that you should follow my advice." Then, after a few moments' silence, he continued: "I have this to say to you once and for all—and it is God's will that I should say it to you—the vow which has been imposed upon you can only result in robbing you of your peace of conscience: if I have been so long in giving you a decision, it was simply because I wished that the divine will might be made quite

* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXIII, p. 282. See also Lettre CCXXI.

clear to me and that the whole affair should be the work of his hand alone." Speaking of this moment in after days, Mother de Chantal said to her sisters: "I listened to the saintly prelate as if a voice from heaven had spoken: he seemed to be in an ecstasy, so intense was his state of recollection, and he went on searching for his words one after the other, as if he found it difficult to speak."*

The next day, before Mass, Francis bade Mme. de Chantal renew her vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity at the moment of the elevation, and to pray to her guardian angel and his to serve as witnesses of this action.† He afterwards heard her general confession and gave her advice as to the life of perfection which he wished her to lead. "As soon as you awake," he said to her, "place yourself in the presence of God by the use of a few pious thoughts. Let the passing from night to day remind you of the passage from time to eternity, where we shall see the fulness of light in the light of God. Then begin your day with meditation and Holy Mass, giving yourself up to these two exercises with great devotion, but above all with great freedom and in harmony with the inspiration of grace, not restricting yourself to any rigid or uncongenial form of prayer. After communion contemplate our Saviour seated upon the throne of your heart and bring to him your senses and the forces of your soul, that they may listen to his commands and promise him fidelity. During the course of the day offer up many ejaculatory prayers, and do so especially at the striking of the hours. Each day of the week enter into one of the wounds of the Saviour and dwell there out of love. If, however, you fail somewhat in the things that I prescribe to you, do not let that become a source of scruples."

Already at this time Mme. de Chantal told the Saint of her desire to enter the religious life, but Francis, always averse to any haste in matters of vocation, recommended her to be patient. He told her to work out her sanctification for the present by means of devotion to God in everyday life, such as would inspire her with charity towards her neighbour, and to avoid anything that might cause unnecessary trouble to others. As an example of this spirit, he took her to task over a certain want of consideration for her servant. She was accustomed to get up very early in the morning to make her meditation, and for this purpose would direct her maid to rise at a similar hour in order to bring her a light and help her to dress. The Bishop became acquainted with this fact, and blamed her for it, saying that, since she rose early to seek God in prayer, she ought to get up by herself in order the better to find him, without giving such unnecessary trouble to her maid.

After spending two days at St. Claude, the Bishop returned to

* Pérennès, vol. ii, vii, p. 406, quoting Mère de Chaugy, part i, chap. xv.

† Pérennès, *ibid.*

Annecy, and Mme. de Chantal made her way back to Dijon. The day after her arrival she visited the church of Notre Dame de l'Etang, where she made an act of thanksgiving for the favour she had just received, and renewed her vows of chastity and of obedience to the guidance of the Bishop of Geneva. On returning home, she drew up and signed a written declaration of this vow, which she immediately despatched to her new director, telling him at the same time that she was still much troubled by temptations with regard to her choice of himself as her director and by the assault of doubts against the faith. In answer to this, Francis de Sales wrote for her benefit a letter of considerable length, of which it is only possible to give here a brief summary. He first of all assured her that in taking him as her director, she had made a good and legitimate choice : the truth of which statement was made evident by the circumstances under which that choice was made—the strong and continual attraction which had led to her action ; the deep consideration which he himself had given to the matter before consenting ; the confirmed judgement of the " good, learned, and prudent " Father de Villars ; and finally the prayers which had been offered up for a long period of time by all those concerned. These things were proofs that her decision had been taken under the manifest influence of grace. " Do not dispute with the enemy on this subject," he wrote : " tell him boldly that it is God who has willed it and who has brought it into effect. It was God who embarked you in your first direction, one suitable for your welfare at that time : it is God who has inclined you towards this later guidance, which, although the instrument thereof is unworthy, he will make both beneficial and useful."

With regard to her temptations against the faith he wrote in a similar strain. " In this temptation we must employ the same policy which we use against that of the flesh. Make no dispute whatever, but do as did the children of Israel with the bones of the paschal lamb, which they did not attempt to break, but cast into the fire. We must make no answer nor even appear to hear what the enemy is saying. However much he may clamour at the door, we must not even say, ' Who goes there ? ' . . . We must prostrate ourselves before God and remain there at his feet : he will understand completely, by the humility of this attitude, that you are his and that you desire his help, although you can utter not a word. . . .

" It is a very good sign that the enemy beats and rages at the door, for it is a proof that he has not gained what he wants. If he had gained it, he would shout no longer : he would enter and stay. . . .

" In the third place, it would be good to give yourself sometimes fifty or sixty strokes with the discipline, or thirty, according as you feel disposed. . . . The physical pain creates a diversion against the

evil and the inward affliction, and calls down the mercy of God: moreover the devil, seeing that the flesh, his ally and confederate, is being beaten, takes fear and flies. But of this third remedy you must make use in moderation, according to the benefit which the experience of a few days will reveal to you."

After a few words of consolation the Bishop passes on to an account of the way in which Mme. de Chantal should pass the day. He appointed certain times for the performance of her religious exercises, and described the manner in which they were to be undertaken; he approved of her fasting on Fridays and taking the discipline twice a week; he gave her advice about the education of her children and about her conduct towards her father-in-law; he specially recommended to her the cultivation of a temper that would be gently flexible before all kinds of disappointments and mishaps, a character that would be ever calm and consistent, neither fickle nor worried nor worrying, a heart freed from all attachment even to its spiritual consolations and exercises, enslaved only to the will of God and ready to follow that will, cost what it might, as soon as the way was clear. "Everything should be done out of love," he said, "and nothing out of constraint: we should love to obey rather than fear to disobey." He laid particular stress upon the fact that he desired to leave her a great liberty of spirit, and that in her present circumstances she was not to bind herself too closely to certain rules, laying aside even her spiritual duties sometimes for the benefit of her neighbour. But this last should be done by way of obedience to the will of God, and the consequent omission in her devotions be made good by love. He gave her rules, moreover, by which she could judge when such interruptions were advisable, so as to avoid the danger of this liberty becoming a licence, destructive of all regularity.*

On receiving this letter the baroness hastened to give effect to the directions of her guide, but at first with too much eagerness and expectation. The result was disappointment. Finding that she could do nothing as perfectly as she wished, she became utterly distressed at her imperfections, condemning herself for her self-imagined coldness and aridity, and making herself miserable because her actual performance fell so far short of her ideals. The Bishop, on receiving news of this state of affairs, promptly wrote to console her. He pointed out that a great deal of her trouble came from feelings, which were not essential to the matter in hand; that she was trying to fly, perhaps, before she had learned to walk; and that, while she was willing to suffer for our Lord's sake, she seemed to want to make her own choice of her cross, instead of leaving that choice in the hands of Jesus Christ.†

* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXXIV, p. 352, *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CCXL, p. 380.

In spite, however, of the advice and consolations of her director, Mme. de Chantal continued to experience a trouble in her soul almost equivalent to the pains of a cruel martyrdom, and these trials went so far as to have an injurious effect upon her health. "Just at the moment when I seem about to attain peace of mind," she wrote, "a new strife begins, a new trouble seizes hold of me, and I cry out: 'My soul is sorrowful unto death.' Sometimes I exclaim: 'Let this chalice pass from me'; but as soon as I have said this, I reproach myself for my cowardice. I feel a great desire to drink the chalice to the last drop, and I turn back and say to our Lord: 'My God, grant me this mercy, that my chalice shall not pass from me until I have drunk it to the dregs.'"*

Alluding to these sufferings and to the generosity with which Mme. de Chantal strove to resign herself to the will of God, the Bishop in a later letter wrote as follows: "I praise God for the constancy with which you are enduring your troubles. Nevertheless I still see therein a little anxiety and worrying which hinders the perfection of your patience. . . . The final result of patience is the complete possession of one's soul, and the more perfect the patience, the more complete and perfect is this possession of the soul. Now patience is all the more perfect when it is less mingled wih anxiety and worry. . . ."

In order to encourage her in these first difficulties along the path of perfection, the Bishop continues: "Courage, I beg of you, my very dear sister. . . . God grant us to devote little attention to the state of the road along which we are passing, but to keep our eyes fixed upon him who guides us and upon the glorious country towards which he is leading us. What should it matter to us whether we pass through deserts or through meadows, provided that God be with us and that we are on our way to Paradise . . . It seems to me that you dwell somewhat too much upon the consideration of your trouble.

"And with regard to what you tell me—that it is a great sorrow to have the will and yet be wanting in the power—I would not say to you that you must will what you can, but do indeed say that it is a great power before God to be able to will at all. . . .

"For the honour of God, submit yourself entirely to his will, and by no other means imagine that you would serve him better in some other way, for we never serve him well except when we serve him as he wishes. Now he wills that you should serve him without enjoyment therein and without sensible affection, nay, even with repugnance and anguish of mind. This service gives no satisfaction to you, but it satisfies him: it is not in accordance with your taste, but it is in accordance with his."

* *Mémoires de la Mère de Chaugy*, p. 58.

It would seem as if Mme. de Chantal had experienced an inclination to protest against the Providence of God with regard to her temptations. At any rate the Bishop remarks towards the end of this letter: "These importunate temptations come from the malice of the devil: but the pain and suffering which you feel thereat come from the mercy of God, who, in opposition to the will of his enemy, draws from that very malice the holy sorrow by which he refines the gold that is to be placed in his treasury. I would say this then: your temptations come from the devil and hell; your grief comes from God and his heaven. . . . Despite the temptations, open your arms to the grief."*

In spite of the consolation which the Baroness derived from these letters, she was still unable to attain that peace of mind which she so ardently desired: she made known to the Saint her longing to come to Savoy, in order that she might discuss more fully the state of her spiritual affairs and receive in personal communication more detailed advice than could be given by way of letters. To this the Bishop at length consented, and gave her an appointment at the Château of Sales on May 21, 1605, the Saturday after Ascension day. She arrived on the date fixed, made a general confession, and gave her director a full account of the whole of her life. During this interview the Bishop received such evident illumination from the Holy Spirit and such a complete understanding of his penitent's spiritual condition that he was filled with joy and consolation. "And now," he said, "you are convinced that you wish to serve Jesus Christ for good and all?"—"Oh yes," she answered, "for good and all."—"You utterly consecrate yourself, therefore, to the pure love of God?"—"Utterly and completely," she replied, "in order that he should take full possession of me and should make me one with him."—"Are you consecrating yourself to him without reserve?"—"I am doing so without the slightest reserve."—"Do you frankly despise the world and its vanities in order to gain Jesus Christ and his grace?"—"I despise it with all my soul: I have a veritable horror of it."—"In fine, it is God alone that you desire."—"Yes, I desire him alone for time and for eternity."—"Ah!" replied Francis, "I would I could tell you now what great thoughts have entered my mind in your regard during the three hours which preceded your arrival. Several years ago God revealed to me something of your future, but I do not wish to communicate it to you until a year hence."—"But, Father," she answered, without seeking a definite meaning to his words, "will you not tear me away from the world and from myself? I long so ardently to be freed from every obstacle that stands in the way of God's service."—"Yes," he rejoined, "you will leave all these things. You will

* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCLXXIII, p. 4.

come to me, and I will make you abandon everything for God's sake."

Then the Bishop drew up for her benefit the rule of life which she was to follow in order to reconcile three great duties which seemed almost inconsistent one with another : on the one hand, the care of her temporal affairs, of her children and her servants ; on the other, the practice of the eminent virtue to which she was called ; and between these two duties that of so regulating her devotion as to make it, not merely no hindrance to others, but even an object of their admiration and goodwill.

Mme. de Chantal remained for ten days at the Château of Sales, occupied for the most part in receiving and assimilating these invaluable lessons. " And those few days," she said, " were so many years of benediction for me. When listening to my holy director, it seemed to me that I was listening to God himself, and all his words passed from his lips into my heart like words of God : indeed, I saw in him as it were a reflexion of the divinity and I seemed to feel near him an impression of the presence of God, who lived and spoke in his servant, and I would have held it the greatest happiness to leave everything and to become the least of the servants of his household, in order to nourish my soul with the words of life that fell from his lips." In fact, Mme. de Chantal held all the counsels of the Saint in such veneration that she used to write them down immediately after receiving them, and sometimes even she begged him to write them with his own hand in a copy-book destined for their collection.

Rendered happy, at last, by the instructions she thus received from the Bishop, Mme. de Chantal returned to the home of her father-in-law, at Monthelon, and there began a new life. She restricted herself to the greatest simplicity both with regard to her dress and her food, gave up to prayer three-quarters of an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening, and passed the day so completely in the presence of God as hardly ever to lose the sense of his nearness. In accordance with the spirit of her director, she took particular care that her piety did not clash with the performance of her daily duties and that it was never the cause of inconvenience to others. She entered into all the details of her housekeeping, taught and amused the children herself, gave religious instruction to her servants, and was never sad or severe, but always kind, gentle, obliging, and easy of approach for all, especially for the poor and afflicted. Moreover, she entertained no scruple about interrupting her devotions or putting them off to a later hour, whenever the voice of charity called her to the service of others. Her servants were the first to notice these things, as well as her recollection before God in the midst of her most absorbing duties, nor were they long in

ascribing the change to its proper cause. "Madame's first director only made her pray three times a day and we were all vexed and wearied by it: but the Bishop of Geneva makes her pray all day long, and that inconveniences no one."

Amongst other matters on which Mme. de Chantal consulted Francis de Sales was that of her attitude towards Louis d'Anlezy, the nobleman by whose clumsiness or mischance her husband had been killed. On this point the Bishop wrote: "It is not necessary that you should seek him out particularly. But should he present himself before you, I wish you to keep your heart gentle, gracious, and compassionate towards him. I know that beyond all doubt your heart will experience the deepest emotion and reluctance, and that your blood will seethe within you: but what does that matter? So also did the heart of our dear Saviour at the sight of Lazarus in death and at the vision of his own passion. Yes, indeed: but let us notice what else the Scriptures tell us—that on each of these two occasions *he lifted his eyes to heaven.* That is it, my daughter. God shows us in these feelings of ours how much there is within us of flesh and bone and spirit. To-day, and indeed in a few minutes, I am going to preach the Gospel of the forgiveness of injuries and of the love of our enemies. I am intensely moved when I think of the graces God has given me after all the offences I have committed. . . . I answer then in this way: I do not mean that you should seek out an opportunity of meeting this poor man, but that you should consent to the wishes of those who desire to create it for you, and that you should give proof that you love all things. Yes, even the death of your husband; yes, that of your fathers, your children, your nearest and dearest; yes, your own death itself in the death and the love of our gentle Saviour."*

In reply to another letter, in which Mme. de Chantal complains of further temptations against the faith, the Bishop reproves her gently for her anxiety in this direction. "Your temptations have come back, and, although you do not answer them a single word, yet do they press you hard. You do not answer them, my daughter, and that is well. But you think of them too much, you fear them too much, you have too great an anxiety about them: they would do you no harm except for that. You are too sensitive about temptations. You love the faith and you do not wish that there should come to you a single thought contrary thereto, and as soon as a thought touches you, you become sad and worried. You are too jealous of this purity of faith and it seems to you that the slightest thing spoils it."†

In a later letter he writes: "Come, my dear daughter, let us

* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCXCVII, p. 67.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CCCVI, p. 87.

journey along these lowly valleys of the small and humble virtues. Therein we shall see roses amongst the thorns, and a charity that blossoms amidst the sorrows of soul and body, the lilies of purity, the violets of self-denial and I know not how many others. Above all things I love these three little virtues—gentleness of heart, poverty in spirit, and simplicity of life: and also these humble duties—visiting the sick, serving the poor, consoling the sad, and the like. But all without anxious hurry and with a genuine freedom. No, our arms are not yet long enough to reach to the cedars of Lebanon: let us be contented with the hyssop of the vales."*

About this time Mme. de Chantal found herself obliged to cope with quite another kind of difficulty. A wealthy nobleman, charmed by her gifts of mind and body, made known to President Frémiot that he desired her hand in marriage, at the same time suggesting a further alliance between his two sons and two of Mme. de Chantal's daughters. Such an offer could hardly fail to look good to the eyes of the President, and he not only suggested the matter to the Baroness himself, but prevailed upon her other relatives and friends to use all their eloquence in support of the project. Having made up her mind never to enter the marriage state again, and having indeed confirmed this resolution by a vow of chastity, Mme. de Chantal had only one course open to her: she refused. But the fact of having to oppose her beloved father's wishes in the matter and to resist the arguments of her family, who laid great stress on her obligation to secure the interests of her children, caused her the greatest anxiety and distress. "As much as I could," she said, "I clung fast to the tree of the cross, for fear lest the charm of these persuasive voices should lull my heart into a vain satisfaction and consent."

The Bishop, on hearing of this new trial, hastened to strengthen her in the keeping of her resolution. "Who are they," he writes, "who thus rashly dare attempt to break and cast down the white column of our sacred tabernacle? Have they no fear of the Cherubim who guard it on either side and cover it with the shadow of their wings? Perhaps, indeed, there has been a little vanity, a certain amount of self-satisfaction, or something of the sort: but that is of little import. You have spoken truly, my child: we must act sharply and decisively on these occasions; we must not strive to occupy the attention of customers, when we have not the goods which they demand; we must tell them this clearly and without ceremony, so that they may betake themselves elsewhere. And really, are they not good and simple folk? Can they not see that we have taken down our sign and have broken off the traffic which we might have had with the world? It is true, indeed, our body belongs no

* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCVIII, p. 92.

longer to ourselves . . . the great King, Jesus, has chosen it for his abiding-place, and who shall deprive him thereof? "*

During all this period of preparation Francis wrote a number of long letters to the Baroness on a variety of subjects, but mostly on the paramount topic of her spirituality: these included a time-table for her hours of devotion; lessons on prayer and the correct apportioning of the imagination, the understanding and the affections in the exercise of meditation; instructions on humility, full illumination and the most apt illustrations; repeated exhortations against her somewhat morbid worry with regard to temptations; and, above all, continual commands to put her confidence in God, not to allow herself to be discouraged by the possibility of offending him, but to rely fully on his loving help and protection. A few passages, selected by M. Hamon, as being particularly distinctive, may give an idea of the Saint's method in dealing with this saintly soul. "I beg you, for the love of God, not to fear God, for he does not wish to do you any harm: love him intensely, for he wills to do you much good. . . ." "Do not make such efforts to conquer your temptations, for these efforts would only strengthen them. Despise them. Take no notice of them. Picture to yourself the crucified Jesus as in your arms or upon your breast, and, kissing his sacred side, say over and over again: 'Here is my hope, and the living source of my happiness. Nothing shall tear me away from his love. What is there on earth or what do I desire in heaven save only thee, O my Jesus? Thou art the God of my heart and the heritage that I desire for ever.'

"Love the cross and its ignominy. Because of the humiliations of our Saviour, love to see yourself poor and pitiful. Find a deep joy in the fact that you are nothing, since your misery serves as an object upon which the goodness of God can exercise its mercy. If God sees that your heart remains joyfully in a lowly esteem of yourself, he will grant you great graces. Remain, therefore, joyfully humble before God and before the world. If the world esteems you, joyfully despise that esteem: if it does not esteem you, then joyfully console yourself therefor, and be happy in the thought that in this matter at least the world has found the truth. . . ."

Greatly helped by these continual counsels and encouragements, Mme. de Chantal, living with her father-in-law at Monthelon, gave herself up with renewed vigour to the sanctification of her soul. Constant in her religious exercises and regular in the performance of every household duty, she also undertook whatever good works lay in her power, nursing the sick, visiting the poor, comforting the afflicted, and making herself the servant of all those who suffered. Yet all this labour seemed to her as nothing in comparison with her desire to give herself entirely to God, and she ever dreamed of the

* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCCXXVIII, p. 141.

day when she would be allowed to enter upon the monastic life in some conventual house. "Do you not think," she wrote to Francis de Sales, "that some day I shall leave all things in the world in order to occupy myself with God alone in silence and retreat? Leave me, at least, this hope, that is so dear to my heart." The Bishop replied that he himself was praying, and was obtaining the prayers of others, in order that he might learn God's will in the matter; that one day she should leave all things, but that for the present he was not certain of her ultimate destination; and that, on her part, she was to abandon herself with absolute resignation to the guidance of Providence, without any other object in life than ever to obey and love God more and more. Finally, in a letter written on February 6, 1607, he told her that, before deciding anything definite, it would be necessary for him to see her, and for this purpose he gave her an appointment at Annecy for the Thursday before Pentecost. When the time of her departure drew near, Mme. de Chantal was obliged by pressing business to put off her journey for several days, and, when at length she set out, found herself forced to travel by long stages, and even during a part of one night in the midst of a terrible storm, in order to arrive punctually on the date arranged. This was on May 30, 1607.

The Bishop, on hearing of these forced journeys, asked her why she had tired herself out in this way. "I did not think I was entitled," she answered, "to dispense myself from the least item of your commands."—"In future," replied Francis, "you must in such cases interpret the strictness of my words by the gentleness of my intentions."

Of the interview which took place between the two saints we have Mme. de Chantal's own account. "When I went to see the saintly prelate," she said, "I did so in the most complete spirit of resignation that was possible to me, without any desire but to accept faithfully what God should command through his voice, with a strong confidence that his decision would be the divine will to which I had vowed all my affections. Up to Whit-Sunday he spoke to me of many things, and made me tell him everything that had taken place within my soul, without revealing his designs to me, but only telling me to pray earnestly to God and to place myself without reserve in God's hands —the which I strove to do with all completeness. Finally, speaking to me on Whit-Monday with a grave and recollected expression, he said that he had made his decision with regard to me.—'And I,' I answered, kneeling before him, 'am resolved to obey you in everything.'—'Well,' he said, to test me, 'you must become a Poor Clare.' —'Father, I am quite ready.'—'No, you are not strong enough: you must become an Augustinian.'—'Father, anything which you wish.'—'And yet, that again is not what I want: you must be a

Carmelite.'—' Father, I am ready to obey.'—' No,' he rejoined, ' that is not what God wants of you : he destines you for the establishment of an order, in which the charity and gentleness of Jesus Christ shall rule, into which shall be admitted the feeble and infirm, and which shall be occupied in tending the sick and visiting the poor.' On hearing this proposal I immediately experienced a great inward correspondence, accompanied by a gentle satisfaction and enlightenment, which gave me assurance that such was indeed the will of God—a feeling which had been wanting when I heard the other proposals, although my heart had given to them a complete submission."

Henceforward the Bishop felt no further hesitation, and his conviction that this design most certainly came from God gave him complete strength in his resolutions. Nevertheless, at first sight, the difficulties seemed insuperable. Mme. de Chantal was still bound to the world by many serious ties—a son and three daughters, whose education was not yet finished or who had not been established in life ; a father and a father-in-law, who depended greatly upon her care in their old age ; and a complicated entanglement of family affairs of which she alone had adequate knowledge. Even when these difficulties were vanquished, whence were to come the resources for the founding and upkeep of the projected establishment ? He himself had scarcely enough money to provide for his own necessities and the exigencies of his rank ; and Annecy, where the order would have to make its first beginnings for obvious reasons, was hardly so rich and populous a city as to provide either sufficient funds or an adequate number of subjects for the future community. Yet the Bishop's faith never hesitated : he saw in his enterprise the work of God, and he was confident that the divine power would make light of the obstacles which stood in the path of its designs.

As a matter of fact, a fortnight later there occurred an incident which, though it happened apparently by the merest chance, opened the way to the Bishop's projects. Mme. de Chantal had returned from the procession of Corpus Christi in a manifest state of fatigue, and several gentlemen, amongst whom was Bernard de Sales, the Bishop's youngest brother, came forward to assist her to her room. Placing her hand on Bernard's arm, the Baroness turned towards the others and said : " Kindly allow me, Sirs, to take this gentleman as being especially mine." These words, prompted by courtesy and having no ulterior design, were taken by Mme. de Boisy to have a deeper sense, and she understood them as expressing a wish, on the part of her guest, that a marriage should be arranged between Bernard de Sales and the eldest daughter of the Baroness. Mme. de Boisy, who had by this time conceived a deep affection for Jane Frances de Chantal, was not long in giving effect to her thoughts,

and she made a definite proposal that they should enter upon negotiations to unite the young people in question. This proposal caused the greatest surprise to Mme. de Chantal. "Never was I so astonished," she related, "as on hearing this proposal, all the more so because I was aware how strongly my daughter's grandfathers would be opposed to her quitting the soil of France. Nevertheless I showed no sign of this, but gave every expression of gratitude to the good lady of Boisy." Thus took place the preliminaries of a marriage, the accomplishment of which was one day to settle Mme. de Chantal at Annecy and bring about the birth of the Order of the Visitation.

A short time afterwards the Baroness returned to Burgundy, taking with her Jeanne de Sales, the Bishop's youngest sister, whom she had promised Mme. de Boisy to educate with her own children. Thus separated once again from her director, Mme. de Chantal found courage and help in the sequence of letters which the Bishop wrote to her in the midst of his diocesan work. For the most part they touched on the points already mentioned in their correspondence —humility, the method of resisting temptations, resignation to God's will, and, in addition, renewed assurances that the Baroness' vocation was at last effectively decided. It is of little use to give short extracts from these lengthy epistles. There is one letter, however, which we will quote very fully both because it is so characteristic of the Saint and because it indicates clearly what were his first designs for the members of his future order, or, as he alluded to them in this letter, the daughters of St Martha. It was written on August 16, 1607.

"The day before yesterday and yesterday I experienced an extraordinary consolation in the home of St Martha,* whom I found so simply and whole-heartedly busy in entertaining our Lord and, in my opinion, somewhat jealous of the happiness which her sister was finding at the feet of the Master. Truly, my dear child, she was right in desiring assistance in the service of her beloved guest, but she was not right in wanting Magdalen to leave her occupation for that purpose and, by so doing, to leave our gentle Lord all alone. . . .

"Do you know how I would like to settle the difference? I should like St Martha, our dear mistress, to come to the feet of Jesus in the place of her sister, and that her sister should go and prepare the rest of the supper; and in this way they would have shared work and repose like good sisters. I think our Lord would have been pleased with this. But in wanting to leave our Saviour altogether alone Martha, I think, was wrong: for he did not come into this world to live in solitude but *to be with the children of men.*

"A strange idea this—to try and correct our good St Martha. But, look you, it is because of the love I bear her. And indeed, I believe

* The Saint's way of alluding to the Gospel in the Mass of the day.

that what she failed to do then, she would be happy to do now in the person of her daughters: and so, these should divide up their time, giving a good part thereof to the outward works of charity and the better part to inward contemplation."*

Now it is known that, at first, Francis intended to call his congregation the Daughters of St Martha.† From this letter, therefore, it is evident, as the editor of the letters points out, that while the Founder intended his sisters to occupy a part of their time in the corporal works of mercy, he never, even in the beginning, wished them to make this their principal work, but desired that they should give the greater part of their day to the life of contemplation.

Soon after the receipt of this letter, Mme. de Chantal was destined to be the recipient of another great sorrow. Jeanne de Sales, who had been confided to her care by Mme. de Boisy and the Bishop, and whom she had been educating with her own children, fell ill, and in spite of all the care lavished on her, died on October 8, as we have related in another part of this work. The terrible loss which was thus entailed upon Mme. de Boisy brought to the mind of the Baroness the project, which had recently been suggested, of uniting the two families by a marriage between Bernard de Sales and her eldest daughter: and Mme. de Chantal now felt borne towards a vow to give effect to this marriage as some sort of consolation to Jeanne's aged mother in the face of the cruel loss inflicted upon her by the hand of death. "As I fell on my knees to make this vow," she related, "the Divine Goodness brought me consolation and revealed to me that this was the means which his Providence had chosen to facilitate my withdrawal to Savoy." Accordingly she suggested the marriage to her father, President Frémiot. When the matter was suggested, he naturally offered considerable opposition, for he could not bear the idea of being separated from his beloved grandchild: but in a short time, reflecting on the advantages of the proposal and particularly influenced by the thought of an alliance with the family of so saintly a person as the Bishop of Geneva, he was moved to give his consent. He himself wrote to Francis to convey to the latter his adhesion to the idea of the marriage. "I must confess, my Lord," he said in this letter, "that never would any power, other than that which God has bestowed upon Mme. de Chantal, have been able to take this little one away from the shelter of my arms." It was the President's example which also influenced M. de Chantal and other relatives of the family to give their consent to the marriage. Henceforward it was only left to arrange the details of the transaction.

It was just at this time, however, that everything was apparently

* E. N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CDVIII, p. 309.

† Note, p. 294, Tom. XIII of the E.N.

exposed to the danger of failure by the attempts of Henry IV to take Francis de Sales away from Savoy and to make him the bishop of some important diocese in France. The Bishop, who kept nothing back from Mme. de Chantal, felt obliged to inform her of these proceedings, and it can easily be imagined how deeply she was troubled by the news. Francis, however, reassured her. "Do not become anxious," he wrote; "nothing will happen except by the will of God. . . . It would not be without repugnance were I obliged to change my home, although I feel in no way bound here except to a few souls, and that by a bond which is purely spiritual, God be thanked. But God will keep all things in his hand, and my soul has no abiding-place but in his admirable Providence."*

The cause of Mme. de Chantal's fears was eventually dissipated, and in a short time she obtained the permission both of her grandfather and her father-in-law to go to Annecy, accompanied by her two daughters, for the Lent of 1609. The ostensible object of this journey was the need of drawing up and signing the marriage contract between her eldest daughter and Baron de Thorens: but as can be imagined, Mme. de Chantal found many other things to do besides the arranging of this family affair. She had numerous consultations with the Bishop about the forthcoming establishment of her congregation, attended all the sermons which he preached at the cathedral, was present at practically all the services of the season's liturgy, made frequent visits to the poor, and was the cause of much edification to the whole town. On Good Friday she renewed her vows in the following form, drawn up by her own hand: "On the anniversary of my Saviour's death, 1609, I renew my vows with a new and incomparable love, wishing for ever to die to myself and to all things, in order to live in obedience to the Divine Will, to which I consecrate myself absolutely and without reserve, so as to obey it in the person of the Bishop of Geneva. And so may my Saviour help me and receive me, as with all my heart I give myself up to him."

Before quitting Annecy she obtained the Bishop's consent to her suggestion that it was now fully time to break the news of her intentions to M. Frémiot. Accordingly, after Easter, when she went back to Dijon to stay there for a time before returning to Monthelon, she sought a favourable opportunity to speak to M. Frémiot about the matter that was always present in her thoughts. One day, which happened to be June 23, when everybody had gone out to see the fireworks, which were customary on the eve of the feast of S. John, she found herself alone with her father and began to discuss with him the education of her children. She complained that it was impossible to bring them up well at Baron de Chantal's

* E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre CDLII, p. 14.

house, which was very badly kept. "Well," answered her father, "there is no need to trouble about that. Your eldest daughter is about to marry Baron de Thorens; the other two are old enough to be sent as boarders to a convent, for the life of which they assert they have a vocation; and I myself will take charge of your son."—"Oh, in that case," answered the Baroness, "please do not be vexed if, taking advantage of the freedom afforded by this admirable arrangement, I leave the world altogether and shut myself up in the cloister, whither God has been calling me for a long time." On hearing this proposal, one so unexpected and of such desolate prospect for himself, the old father was utterly overcome by grief, and burst into tears. Moved by his distress, Mme. de Chantal hastened to assure him that for the present it was only a matter of suggestion, that she had felt nevertheless she ought to tell him in confidence, as she wished to keep back nothing from his ears, and that the Bishop of Geneva, whom she had consulted, was of opinion that her desire was inspired within her by the action of God. "I confess," answered M. Frémiot, "that the Bishop of Geneva is possessed by the Spirit of God. But I beg of you to settle nothing definitely until I have spoken to him of the matter."—"I promise you that," she answered, "and all the more willingly because I prefer to bind myself by what the two of you shall decide than by my own feelings." Shortly afterwards the Baroness set out for Monthelon and there awaited the arrival of the Bishop, who in a few months' time came to the Château to officiate at the marriage of his brother, Bernard de Sales, with Mlle. de Chantal.

The day after the wedding, October 14, 1609, the Bishop of Geneva held a consultation with M. Frémiot and the Archbishop of Bourges in order to arrive at some decision with regard to Mme. de Chantal: she herself, in the meantime, spent her time in praying that God would help them with his light to settle the question of her future in the fullest accord with his divine will. Eventually she was invited to join the Bishop and his companions and to lay before them her own wishes in the matter under discussion. With the greatest clearness she outlined the design which had been maturing in her mind for a considerable time; described how she had reduced the complicated affairs of the family to complete order, leaving her children free from all debts and lawsuits; and suggested that, while carrying out her intentions, it would be quite possible to educate her two daughters near her and, if need should arise, give her personal attention to the interests of her family. The manner in which the Baroness spoke of these things, the calm dignity of her bearing, and the admirable way in which she had arranged for almost every possible contingency made the deepest impression upon her father and brother, and went far towards convincing them that she was

actuated in her designs by the Spirit of God. These first impressions were still further deepened when the Bishop of Geneva supplemented what they had heard from Mme. de Chantal. He told them that the plan proposed had not been conceived at a moment's notice or without much thought, that he himself had considered it fully and deliberately for several years, that he felt he would be running contrary to the divine will if he opposed Mme. de Chantal in her desire, that the President and the Archbishop would do well to consider the matter, and, in doing so, should bear in mind how dangerous it would be to refuse their consent to what, it seemed to him, came so manifestly from the will of God. Finally, after further deliberation, M. Frémiot and his son felt it incumbent upon them to waive their objections and give their full consent. The President restricted himself to a demand that the first house of the Order should be founded at Dijon, while the Archbishop was equally anxious that it should be domiciled at Bourges : to these two requests Mme. de Chantal replied that of necessity the first foundation would have to be made at Annecy for the two reasons that the Order, in its beginning, would have continual need of its Founder's advice and that her being in the neighbourhood of Thorens would make it possible to be near her eldest daughter, in order to train her in the management of a large household. Her father and brother submitted to the force of these reasons. It was finally decided that Mme. de Chantal should go to Annecy in about six weeks' time, and that she should take her two youngest daughters with her, in order to exercise a continual supervision over their education. It now only remained to communicate these things to the aged Baron de Chantal. Although in the past the old man had shown very little appreciation for the devotion and love which his daughter-in-law had always given him, he now, on hearing of her proposed departure, made all kinds of objections and was vehement in his outcries against the new proposals. Indeed, he was so deeply moved, that he burst into tears and appeared to be beyond all consolation. Mme. de Chantal, however, undertook the task of pacifying him and of converting him to a reasonable view of the circumstances : in a short time she was successful in obtaining her father-in-law's consent and in bringing consolation to his mind.

Having thus successfully achieved the object of his journey, Francis officiated on the following Sunday at Monthelon, gave Holy Communion to the people, and preached a sermon which was the cause of a conversion. He afterwards received a visit from Mlle. Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchard which resulted in his obtaining a recruit for the new institution. This young lady had at one time entered the Carmelite Order, but had been forced to leave it on account of her health, which was not strong enough to endure the severity of that

particular rule. The Bishop, on making enquiry as to her disposition, found her possessed of such eminent virtue, such sincere charity, and such a strong desire to be associated with Mme. de Chantal, that he prophesied her future destination as one of the foundation-stones of his congregation. It was decided that, as soon as matters were definitely settled, Mlle. de Bréchard would, on a summons from the Bishop, betake herself to the place which should be chosen for the opening of the foundation. After these things had been arranged, Francis returned to Annecy, where he devoted himself to the preparation of all that was necessary to the fulfilment of his projects.

In a letter addressed to a Jesuit father on May 24, 1610, we have an outline of the constitutions which he was then planning for his congregation. These were framed on the simplest and most unpretentious lines at first, for the Founder knew well the value of a small beginning.

" I am opening the door," he wrote, " to a little assembly or congregation of women and young girls, who are to live together, by way of an experiment, under a few humble rules of piety. We will commence with poverty, because our congregation has no pretensions towards any other riches than good works. At the beginning their enclosure will be as follows: no man shall enter the house except for such reasons as permit their entry into the reformed convents. Women also will only be granted admission with the leave of the Superior, that is to say, of the Bishop or his delegate. As to the sisters, they will be allowed to go out for the service of the poor after the year of their noviciate, during which their dress will not differ from that of the women of the world, only that it shall be black and shall be fashioned according to the dictates of Christian humility and modesty. They will sing the Little Office of Our Lady, in order to find therein a holy and divine recreation. In addition to this, they will occupy their time in every kind of pious exercise, notably in that of a holy and loving union of mind with God. . . . Such, my dear Father, is the outline and first sketching of this work, which God will lead to such perfection as he wills, and in behalf of which my courage stands with incredible confidence, believing that God will find it agreeable to himself."*

The Bishop's next task was to choose suitable subjects for the new foundation. Already he could reckon on Mme. de Chantal and Mlle. de Bréchard. With these he associated Mlle. Favre, the eldest daughter of his friend, the President. This lady had achieved considerable success in society on account of the brilliance of her mind, the charm of her manners and conversation, the attractiveness of her beauty, and the gracefulness of her dancing. In the midst of

* E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DXCIX, p. 305.

this success, however, the grace of God brought vividly before her mind the emptiness of the world's triumphs and its powerlessness to help the soul at the hour of death. These impressions were still further reinforced by reflection, and finally, after putting herself under the guidance of Francis de Sales, she had made up her mind to leave the world. It so happened that about this time the Bishop's brother, Louis de Sales, was bethinking himself of marrying for the second time. Greatly attracted by the personal charm and excellent character of Mlle. Favre, he asked her father for the privilege of taking her as his wife. The President, greatly pleased at the prospect of marrying his daughter to such a virtuous and distinguished gentleman, immediately gave his consent, and informed his daughter of the proposed alliance. Mlle. Favre lost no time in seeking the Bishop's aid: she begged him to use his influence in freeing her from any such negotiation and to do all in his power to help her in the keeping of her resolution. Francis undertook to put an end to the matter, but found it necessary to use all his persuasiveness with President Favre before he could induce the latter to abandon the idea of the marriage. With his brother he had less difficulty. One day, when he was sitting at table with Louis, he introduced the subject, remarking: "Do you know, brother, that you have a formidable rival to whom you will be obliged to give up your lady?" —"What do you mean by this talk of rival?" answered Louis: "who is there that would venture to dispute my claims in this matter?"—"He is a rival," rejoined the Bishop, "before whom, brave as you are, you would tremble. It is no other than Jesus Christ, your sovereign master, who has chosen Mlle. Favre for his spouse to the exclusion of all others. And so, I beg you, put it out of your mind."—"God forbid," answered Louis de Sales, "that I should oppose the vocation of Mlle. Favre and the will of our Lord." He was as good as his word. Meeting the young lady on a subsequent occasion, he said to her: "If you were leaving me for another man, I should be inconsolable. But seeing that it is God, I renounce all my claims, and I leave you to the Heavenly Spouse, whose unworthy servant I am, not venturing to think that I could find any merit as his rival." Freed, in this manner, to follow her vocation, Mlle. Favre had no further thought than to become a religious and to take her place by the side of Mme. de Chantal.

The Bishop was hoping at this time to include amongst the names of his postulants that of Marie Aimée, daughter of M. de Blonay. This young lady had already, more than a year ago, spoken to Francis of her desire to become a religious, and it seems to have been understood that she was to join the new community. "I am writing to tell you . . . that during this springtime we are expecting Mme. de Chantal in order to begin our little congregation, for which you

know the Holy Spirit has destined your daughter. I look upon her as mine. It struck me this morning, when thinking of her, that to her soul particularly are addressed the words of the Sacred Spouse: *Arise, hasten, my beloved;** for after all *Beloved* is her name and the Spouse calls her thereby. Tell this beloved child Aimée therefore to come to us with good heart. . . ."† Mlle. de Blonay, however, was not prepared to enter the cloister at this moment: she was, indeed, intending to join the new community in the autumn, when her family was afflicted by a terrible tragedy. Her brother, Gabriel de Blonay, was assassinated on November 18 in the cemetery of S. Paul, near Evian. It was in consequence of this sad event that Mlle. de Blonay's admission was deferred to January 25, 1612.‡

Two other ladies who were prepared to join Mme. de Chantal were Mlle. Adrienne Fichet and Mlle. Péronne de Chastel: to these was added one who had for a long time been under the guidance of Francis de Sales and who had proved her merit in the face of the greatest difficulties. This was Anne Jacqueline Coste, the servant maid whom the provost of Geneva had found in the hostelry of the Ecu de France at the time of his conferences with Beza. Struck by her remarkable disposition, the Saint had arranged for her to leave Geneva and settle in Annecy, where she had placed herself under his spiritual direction. He had obtained a situation for her in another hostelry, where she continued to develop the characteristics which he had first noticed in her at Geneva. In the midst of the noise and bustle of an hotel life she served God with a tranquil piety, a deep inner recollection, and an unchanging gentleness in the face of every kind of contradiction. She did all things out of the pure love of God, and the Bishop often referred to her as a saint, frequently commending himself and his trouble to her prayers. She was one of those souls who receive a special knowledge from God. A long time ago she had told him of her desire to become a lay sister in the convent of nuns which he was one day to found. "And who," he asked, "has told you that I am going to found a convent of nuns?"—"No one," she answered: "but I am continually conscious of this impression in my heart, and so I have told you of it." Yet up to that moment the Bishop had not communicated his plans to a single soul, and consequently he concluded that God had revealed the matter to his servant. The result was that Francis told her in full all that he was planning in his mind, and thenceforward she never ceased preparing herself in a special manner for the cloistral

* It must be noticed that the Saint's quotations from Scripture are often rather of the general meaning than of the exact text. Compare the above with *Canticle* II, 10–13.

† E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DLXXIII, p. 248.

‡ See note to Lettre DLXXVIII.

life, and, urged on by the intensity of her desires, would repeatedly ask of her director: "And when is Madame coming?" This was her usual way of speaking of Mme. de Chantal.

The Bishop's next task was to find a home for his religious. This necessity was providentially supplied by the generosity of M. de Cusy, Baron de Pingon, the same gentleman who had so hospitably entertained the pilgrims of the Confraternity of the Cross on a former occasion. This nobleman and his wife had both been desirous of giving up their married life in order to embrace the religious state. For this purpose he had been negotiating the foundation of a house of Carmelites at Annecy, in which his wife and a niece, Mlle. de Chapot, would become sisters of the Order. Eventually he succeeded in finding a house, such as he desired, in the faubourg de la Perrière, a moderately sized building, suitable for the shelter of a dozen people, and furnished with an oratory for the purpose of community worship. For certain reasons, however, the whole project fell through, and the Baron, hearing of the Bishop's intentions, offered the house to him for the new foundation. Thus everything was now ready for Mme. de Chantal and her companions.

The Baroness, on her part, was most anxious to begin her religious life as soon as possible. At the moment it seemed that she would be hindered by the incidence of a lawsuit for the recovery of money owing to her children. Rather than suffer any further delay, she paid the money out of her own private funds, and was thus ready to set out on her journey to Annecy.

Prior to this, however, she had to undergo the bitter trial of saying farewell to her children, relatives, and friends. Her first duty was to the aged Baron de Chantal. Forgetful of all that she had had to endure under his roof, she knelt down before him, asked his pardon for any faults that she had committed against him, and begged for his blessing. The old man, realizing at last all that his daughter-in-law had been to him, was filled with grief: he embraced her affectionately and wished her all the happiness she deserved. After this she said good-bye to all her people of Monthelon, her servants, retainers, tenants, and poor, making them a little exhortation to be faithful to their duties and their religion, and begging them to remember her in their prayers. She then set out for Autun, where, in order to gain strength for her last trial, she spent some time in religious exercises, visiting the poor and the hospital, and giving alms to those in need. Finally she arrived at Dijon, where her family and friends had assembled to bid her farewell. This last parting, and especially the final scene with her son, was the bitterest of trials. The boy flung his arms around her neck, weeping and begging that she would give up all idea of abandoning him, and when, after striving to console him as best she could, she made a

movement towards her father's study, the child suddenly flung himself down across the doorway and strove to stop her by making it only possible for her to leave at the cost of stepping across his body. And this, indeed, she found herself obliged to do. The interview with her father was almost as bitter, although the President, strengthened by a knowledge which was not possible for the child, understood to the full how imperious is the call of Christ in such cases, and was fully resigned to the sorrow of a lasting separation. After a short conversation, broken from time to time by their grief, he gave her his blessing and sent her out to her new life with words of tenderness and benediction. It now only remained to bid farewell to the others of her family who were awaiting her, and to the servants of the household. Turning towards them, where they were gathered together, she said: "You must forgive my weakness; I am leaving my father and my son for ever. But my faith must bring me consolation. I shall find God everywhere."

With her she was bearing a letter from M. de Frémiot to Francis de Sales. "My Lord," it ran, "this paper should be covered with tears rather than words, since my daughter, in whom I was hoping to find the consolation and repose of my old age, is departing hence, to leave me a father without children. Nevertheless I submit myself to the good pleasure of God. And since he wills to take my daughter into his service in this world, in order to lead her along that path towards the glory of eternity, I prefer his will, with repose in my conscience, to the satisfaction of my affection. . . ."

Mme. de Chantal, accompanied by Mlle. de Bréchard, set out immediately on her journey: it was to be for them a kind of pilgrimage, filled with devotion and good works. As soon as they passed the gates of the city of Dijon, the Baroness consecrated this beginning of their road by intoning several verses from the psalms of the Royal Prophet: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord (Ps. 121). How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts: my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord (Ps. 83). For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters (Ps. 90). The snare is broken, and we are delivered (Ps. 123)." And this last verse she repeated several times. Throughout the whole journey, wherever the two travellers stopped for their night's rest, they made a point of visiting the sick either in the hospitals or in the homes of the invalids, and the next morning, before setting out again on their journey, would return to their charges, to make the poor people's beds and to ask the favour of their prayers. Dividing their spare time in this manner between prayer and works of charity, the two ladies gradually drew near to Annecy. Meanwhile the Bishop of Geneva had been informed that they were approaching their journey's end, and, accompanied by

some twenty-five well-known people of the city, went out to meet them. They arrived on April 4, 1610. The Baroness passed a full week at Annecy, engaged partly in various exercises of devotion and partly in conference with Francis de Sales. After the solemnities of Easter she went with her daughter to the Château of Sales, and remained there for six weeks, in order to teach the latter how to govern her household, to help her to bring all things into order, and especially to surround her with people of intelligence and trustworthy character.

Mme. de Chantal then returned to Annecy for the feast of Whitsuntide. It was at this time that the Bishop had been hoping to open his community, in order that his daughters, enclosed, as he expressed it, " in a little cenacle, should receive the Holy Spirit, and should be filled with that grace which confers upon its recipients the gifts of a new language and the power to lead a new life." Unfortunately for this plan, the lady who had undertaken to lodge them in the Gallery House, with the intention of joining the community itself, had recently changed her mind, and the opening of the congregation was perforce deferred. Francis was eventually obliged to sign the contract of possession in his own name. Once the house was bought, there only remained to adapt it to its new employment, a process which it did not take very long to effect.

During this time Mme. de Chantal, anxious to imitate the poverty of Jesus Christ and to give her new congregation an example of self-sacrifice, made an act of renunciation which was severely blamed by many of her friends as an act of imprudence, but which was understood and admired by persons of discernment. Contenting herself with a modest pension guaranteed to her by her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, she made over all her personal property, and even her dowry, to her children. For obvious reasons this seemed a rash act of generosity on her part, but both the Baroness and the Bishop of Geneva, who counselled her in this matter, were actuated by higher views than those of human prudence. They wished to make an act of confidence in the providence of God and to show that, as the members of the congregation were giving up all things for his sake, they trusted him to grant them what was necessary for the needs of their daily life.

It must not be imagined that these various sacrifices were made without great cost and at the price of more than one bitter struggle. The Baroness was indeed assailed at this time by a cruel temptation of doubt as to the rightfulness of her recent actions. The idea came into her mind that she was committing a harsh and cruel act in thus abandoning her father in his old age, her children in their youth, and so many others who had depended on her in innumerable ways : and this persistent thought, coupled with a temptation to relinquish

even at the last moment her project of leaving the world, kept her at one time in a state of the cruellest anguish and uncertainty for more than three hours. Falling upon her knees, she cried out three times: "*Deus in adjutorium meum intende.* My God, come to my assistance; look with eyes of mercy upon my distress. I abandon myself, O my God, to thy adorable providence; that my relatives, my children, and myself perish, if such be thy order, is not what matters to me. My only interest, in time and in eternity, is to serve and obey thy incomparable majesty." Scarcely had she uttered these words, than she regained her former peace of soul; and she was filled with such spiritual sweetness and consolation, that no further doubt existed in her mind as to the divine origin of her resolution to quit all things for the sake of God.

The next day, June 6, 1610, was the date fixed for the foundation of the new congregation. After going to confession to the Bishop and receiving Holy Communion at his hands, the Baroness, accompanied by Mlle. Favre and Mlle. de Bréchard, visited the churches of the town and took leave of her friends. That evening, quitting President Favre's house, where they had been staying, they made their way to the Bishop's residence, to seek his blessing. Giving them a short address, Francis said to them: "You are indeed highly favoured, you whom the Lord has chosen; let your hearts be filled ever with a great but humble courage. God will be your God, and under the watchfulness of his protection you will gain the victory over your foes." He then handed to Mme. de Chantal an abridgement of the constitutions which he had drawn up for their benefit. "Follow this path," he said, "and lead along its course those whom God has destined to follow in your footsteps." Raising his eyes towards heaven, he gave them his blessing, "in the name of the all-powerful God who was calling them; in the name of the Son, the eternal Wisdom, who was guiding them; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was enkindling within them the fire of his divine love."

On leaving the episcopal residence, they were escorted to their new home by the Bishop's brothers, Louis, Jean François, and Bernard, while the crowd, which had assembled to see them pass by, greeted them with blessings and good wishes. On reaching the House of the Gallery, their first visit was made to the chapel, where, falling on their knees, they thanked God for his favours with the chanting of the *Gloria Patri*, and begged of him the grace to accomplish his will in their enterprise and to live together in the fulness of charity. Then Mme. de Chantal embraced her companions affectionately, and they, on their part, acknowledged her as their Superioress, and made her a promise of obedience. After reading the rules of the house and reciting their evening prayers together,

they retired to rest. The next day they dressed themselves in the habit of the noviciate. Francis came at eight o'clock in order to say Mass for them, at the end of which he spoke to them on the subject of fidelity in observing their rule. He then left them to begin their new life and to make their first steps along the difficult and unknown path which they had chosen.

CHAPTER II*

Early days of the Visitation Order

THE noviciate of the first sisters of the Visitation, thus begun, was carried on with all the fervour that might have been expected from the zeal of the Foundress and her companions. Every morning they heard Mass in their chapel—a Mass celebrated either by the Bishop or his chaplain: the rest of the day was given up to prayer, meditation, and works of piety. In these noviciate days they never left the convent, but kept to a most rigorous seclusion.

"From the very first day of our retreat," said S. Jane Frances de Chantal,† "we set ourselves to the exact observance of everything that was marked out for us, and the exercises of those early days were the same as those of to-day. We made the slightest thing a matter of conscience, and this to such an extent that, when our two dear sisters once tasted a fallen pear in the orchard to see if it was time to gather the fruit, they conceived a scruple thereat, and told our saintly father about it. He bade them mention it in confession and inform the Mother Superior of it, as they should do with everything which they might inadvertently do against the rule, however small it might seem to them. That great Saint developed in us so great a love of exactitude and simplicity that on the slightest little failing we experienced remorse of conscience, and the moment a sister felt that she had something on her mind, she would straightway go and throw herself at the feet of the Mother Superior in order to accuse herself of it with sorrow and humility.

"It would be impossible to find greater candour, innocence, and holy joy than that which reigned in these dear souls. And it was all accompanied by such trust in Providence that they shut themselves up without any provision, not even a piece of bread or a drop of wine, without even any thought of providing such beforehand. There was only a very small sum of money for this enterprise, founded, as it was, upon confidence in God, which made our blessed father say of it that divine Providence had made it, like the world, out of nothing. This poverty was one of our chief consolations, and I remember the joy which we felt when, our good out-sister having bought a sack of charcoal for three halfpence, we went, all

* Hamon, l. v, chap. 2.

† *Histoire de la Fondation du premier Monastère d'Annecy*, by Mother de Chaugy.

three of us with our keys, according as the rule ordains, to open the money coffer, and found therein only just these three halfpennies. In all things we managed our affairs in accordance with our poverty, but never did we have to endure the want of anything that was actually necessary. We enjoyed a holy peace in our retreat, favoured by the spiritual instructions given to us by our blessed father with his incomparable sweetness and zeal—so happy all three of us, with our good out-sister, and in such peace, that our good Sister Favre used often to say that, except for the glory of God, she would wish that we might pass all our lives thus without any increase in numbers.

"Towards the end of July two sisters of great virtue, Sister Roget and Sister de Chastel,* came to join us, and towards the month of December there came three others,† so that the number of our community rose to eight. It is impossible to describe the heavenly graces and favours which God poured out upon these beloved souls: there was evident in this little community such fervour in the observance of rule, such recollection and the spirit of prayer, such child-like candour and innocence, such kindness, gentleness, and saintly joy in conversation, and such a great love of unity amongst them that to dwell in that house was to live in a paradise of delights. They only spoke of God and of the way to advance in his holy love —a thing which gave unspeakable consolation to our holy Founder. He visited us often, heard our confessions every fortnight, and gave us short spiritual conferences, in order to teach us true perfection, assigning to each, according to her needs, the practice of some particular virtue."

It can well be imagined that the great ambition of the sisters was to make their profession and to feel that they were definitely consecrated to God. "When will come the happy day," wrote Mother de Chantal to the Bishop, "on which I shall make the irrevocable offering of myself to God? His goodness has filled me with such an extraordinary and powerful realization of the grace of belonging entirely to him that, if this feeling lasts in all its vigour, it will utterly consume me. Never have I had such a great desire and such an ardent love for evangelical perfection. It is impossible for me to express what I feel or the greatness of the perfection to which God is calling us. Alas! the more I resolve to be faithful indeed to the love of my Saviour, the more impossible it seems to correspond to the full greatness of that same love's attraction. O what a cruel thing in love is this barrier of our own powerlessness! But what am I saying? I am lowering the gift of God by my words, and I shall never be able to express this feeling of love which invites me so

* Claude Françoise Roget and Péronne de Chastel.

† Marie Marguerite Milletot, Adrienne Fichet and Claude Marie Thiollier.

urgently towards entire poverty, humble obedience, and perfect purity."*

Eventually the time of probation for the first three members of the community came to its term, and the Bishop held the usual examination as to their disposition towards the religious life. The result of the enquiry was that he considered the time ripe for their profession and fixed the date of the ceremony. The sisters, on hearing his decision, began to prepare for the great occasion, and, amongst other things, bethought themselves of decorating their chapel. For this, however, funds were needed, and the only money which they possessed was a sum given to them by the Bishop for the care of any who were sick, and strictly destined by him for that purpose alone. Sister Favre and Sister Bréchard earnestly urged their Superioress to make use of this money, reminding her that President Favre had made them a promise of further supplies in the near future, from which they could replace the sum needed at the moment. After hesitating for a time, Mme. de Chantal surrendered to their insistence. No sooner, however, was the money spent, than she was tormented with remorse for what she now saw clearly to be an act of disobedience, and that very evening she hastened to write to Francis in order to inform him of what had taken place. The Bishop was deeply grieved at this infringement of his express commands, and the next morning visited the convent in order to deal with the matter. In itself the act was a small one, but it was just such small faults as this that were likely to undermine the discipline of a house and spoil the perfection of its spirit. The moment he appeared at the convent Mme. de Chantal cast herself on her knees before him and with tears in her eyes asked pardon for the fault which had been committed. " This, my daughter," he said to her, " is the first time that you have disobeyed my commands. For the greater part of the night I could find no sleep because of it, and I cannot describe to you the grief which it had caused me.', It was probably the first time that the Bishop had ever spoken to the Baroness with severity, and such was the reverence in which she held him and so completely was she overwhelmed at the thought of thus displeasing him that she was utterly prostrated by her grief and was hardly to be consoled for the consequences of her fault.

The day of the profession had been fixed for June 6, 1611. As a preliminary, the Bishop, speaking with exceptional emotion and fervour, gave them a preparatory instruction, in which he directed their minds towards the nature of the sacrifice they were about to make. Then, when all was ready, he put on his pontifical vestments, seated himself before the altar, and delivered a more formal sermon. Amongst other things, he compared the three persons, whose

* *Vie et Œuvres de Ste. Chantal*, IV, 4.

profession he was about to receive, to three grains of corn, which, carried by chance to a little corner of the earth and there cast into the soil, sprang up and multiplied in such a manner that in a few years the whole country abounded in corn. Speaking as if inspired by a prophetic spirit, he exclaimed: "In the same way, I hope, we shall see these three souls, which the providence of God has sown here as in some small corner of the earth, become multiplied beyond count; the divine mercy will bless them with a great posterity and will be glorified in their work." When the sermon was ended, the Mother Superior and Sisters Favre and de Bréchard made their profession with the greatest fervour and joy, and it was then that Mme. de Chantal, carried away by her happiness and without the slightest premeditation, intoned three times the verse: *Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi: hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam.* (*This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.*) This was the origin of the Visitation custom of chanting this verse at the conclusion of a profession. The ceremony carried out on this occasion became the type of that which was used thereafter up to the present day, with this exception, that in place of the vows now taken by the sisters there was only a simple offering of self to God. For in his first design Francis had not intended to found a religious order, strictly so called, but an institution in which there was to be no other binding but that of charity, *the bond of perfection.* "And certainly," said Mme. de Chantal afterwards, "because of our innermost resolution to persevere in this way of life, that bond held us just as firmly as could have done all the vows in the world." When the ceremony was finished, a number of the distinguished people who had been present desired to offer the usual congratulations to the newly professed sisters: but the Bishop would have none of it. "Let us withdraw," he said to those present, "and let these new spouses of Jesus Christ enjoy the gift of God in peace and silence."

It must not be imagined that the new foundation met with no opposition or had no critics. A number of people affected to regard it with scorn and spoke disparagingly of it, while one or two even ventured to ridicule it to the Bishop's face. On a certain occasion Francis was speaking to a lady about the convent, and was telling her that he intended to block up a window which looked out upon the street. "That would be a good thing to do, my Lord," answered the lady, "for there is nothing to be seen—not even an object—in your enterprise." Others, alluding to the absence of external austerity which was a characteristic of the institution, used to say that these nuns had discovered the secret of going to Paradise by a path strewn with thornless roses, of getting into it through another door than that of the Cross, and by means of a key different from that which

the son of David carried upon his shoulders. Others again went so far as to dub the Bishop's Order the Confraternity of the Descent from the Cross, because, said they, by avoiding suffering, the nuns had practically taken Jesus down from the crucifix.

Humble in all that came from his own initiative, Francis did not altogether disregard these criticisms, but consulted a well-known Jesuit, Father Ignace Armand, as to their justice. "My Lord," replied this priest, "people say that you are founding a hospital rather than a convent. But that is the way of the world; it must find something to say about everything. We have monasteries that are very severe, and the world blames them for their unreasonable rigour. By your Visitation, which is neither too easy for the strong nor too harsh for the weak, you are rearing imitators of the benignity of the Word made flesh, who rejected no one: and the children of the world must needs find blame for that! These people have minds which have little understanding of the maxims of the Cross, and they do not know how difficult it is for human nature to die for self in order to live for God, and to renounce one's self in order to carry the cross. . . . There is found in your design the poverty of Bethlehem and the reasonable comforts of Nazareth, the solitude of the desert and the gentle conversation of Bethany. Finally in Mme. de Chantal one sees a resemblance with our Saviour—poor, gentle, kind, gracious, hidden, and retired, full of the spirit of prayer yet ready to converse with others, loving solitude yet serving her neighbour, glorified on Thabor but crucified on Calvary."

Encouraged by these words, Francis went on his way in peace, confident that his work, initiated, as he felt sure, under the inspiration of God, would increase from its small beginnings to become a great factor in the sanctification of souls. "When Providence has made known its designs," he would say, "we must go forward, no matter what men may say. We ought not to be afraid of insults where there is profit to be gained for souls. And even were this foundation to serve merely for the prevention of one mortal sin, I should be satisfied therewith. Men imagine that on my death the whole thing will fall to pieces. But our Mother, who never dies and who reigns for ever in heaven, has more power to preserve the sisters than have all the men in the world to destroy them." As a matter of fact, so well did our Lady watch over the nuns of her Visitation that in less than sixty years the Order possessed no fewer than one hundred and twenty houses.

Four days after the profession of Mother de Chantal and her companions the Bishop wrote a letter which, by reason of its date and of the subsequent origin of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is extremely interesting. It was written on June 10, 1611, which in that year fell upon the Friday after the Octave of Corpus

Christi. The object of the letter was to reveal to Mother de Chantal a thought which, he said, had been given to him by God the night before, and which was none other than that the Visitation had now become sufficiently established to receive its coat of arms. "I thought, then, my dear Mother," he wrote, "that, if you agree with me on the point, we ought to take as our arms a heart, pierced by two arrows, enclosed in a crown of thorns, this poor heart serving as the setting to a cross, which will rise therefrom, and will be inscribed with the sacred names of *Jesus* and *Mary*. My daughter, I will tell you at our next meeting a thousand little thoughts which came to me on this subject: for truly our little congregation is a work of the heart of Jesus and of Mary. The dying Saviour gave birth to us through the wound of his Sacred Heart."*

In the month of September Mother de Chantal was obliged to leave the convent, and once more make a journey into Burgundy. The reason for this was the death of her father, President Frémiot. This sad event had taken place on January 21, 1611. When the news reached Annecy, the Bishop at first kept it back from Mother de Chantal, because at that period the latter was in a very weak state of health, but towards the end of the month of February he thought her strong enough to bear the shock.† On hearing the news, she exclaimed: "Alas, how did he die?"—"He died a very holy death," answered Francis, "in the arms of his son, the Archbishop of Bourges." "—God be thanked," she added, and, sustained for the moment by the presence of the Bishop and by her habitual command of herself, she outwardly bore the blow with wonderful fortitude. But as soon as she found herself alone and realized fully the extent of her loss, her ardent and affectionate nature gained the upper hand and she wept bitterly. Moreover, before long, her grief was intensified by thoughts of self-reproach: the idea entered her mind that perhaps her departure had hastened her father's death, that she might have protected him by her loving care, and that in any case she ought to have been by his side at the last sorrowful moment. Such thoughts as these plunged her into the cruellest grief, and for a time she could find no consolation. Eventually she had recourse to the divine help, and, falling on her knees in prayer, made an act of resignation and of complete abandonment to the will of God. In this act of her will and in the help which it elicited from heaven she once more regained her peace of mind.

It was at once evident, however, that the President's death would make it necessary for Mother de Chantal to journey into Burgundy, partly for the settlement of family affairs and partly to arrange for the education of her son, of which the President had taken charge

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCXCIII, p. 63.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre DCLXIV, p. 22.

since her departure from Dijon. In preparation for her journey she renewed her vow of poverty on August 22, and appointed Sister de Bréchard as her vicegerent during her absence. Then she set out for Burgundy on September 5. During her journey she contrived to fulfill her religious observances almost as if she were still within her convent, and maintained scrupulously that reserve which her sacred calling demanded: yet it was all done with charity and tact, and wherever it was necessary that she should have dealings with others, they found her completely free from any affectation of piety and full of that charm and graciousness which had ever been her characteristics. At Dijon she received the warmest welcome from her friends, and in a short time had won the admiration of all by the gentleness, modesty, and charity of her bearing towards those who were brought into contact with her. She set all the family affairs, which needed her attention, into perfect order with her old practical skill, paid a visit to her father-in-law and other relations, and then, finding her mission accomplished, began to make ready for her return journey to Annecy. Her relatives, however, were very dissatisfied with her action in entering the convent, and now took this opportunity of trying to persuade her to abandon her congregation. It was urged by some that she owed a duty to her children and especially to her son, for whom the death of M. Frémiot was a serious loss: whilst others took it upon themselves to become indignant at her self-abasement, and declared it to be a dishonour for the whole family that a person of her rank should hide herself underneath two ells of coarse cloth. They averred with anger that her veil ought to be torn into a thousand pieces. To the first class of complainants Mother de Chantal answered that she could quite well supervize her children's education from Annecy, and that with regard to her son she was fully prepared to journey to Dijon whenever his or his sisters' affairs demanded it. To the other people she retorted smilingly yet firmly: "Whoever loves his crown more than his head, will not lose the one without the other," intimating thereby that she would rather lose her life than her veil, which she regarded as her crown.

After staying for four months in Burgundy she set out on her return to Annecy. At the very beginning of her journey she received a special favour at the hands of God, which confirmed her in her religious life against the recent attacks, and made her long all the more to serve God with perfection. Having stopped on the first day at a wayside chapel to hear Mass, she fell into a state of ecstasy, in which it was given her to see the pleasure which God takes in a perfectly pure soul. There also came into her mind the idea of engaging herself by a vow always to do that which should seem to her most perfect. After her arrival at Annecy, which occurred on

December 24, she told the Bishop of her experience and of her desire to take the particular vow of perfection which seemed to have been instilled into her mind by God himself. Francis gave his consent, and Mother de Chantal made this further consecration of herself on December 27 with all the fervour of which a soul like hers was capable.

During the absence of their Mother Superior in Burgundy the sisters of the new foundation had been grievously tried by sickness. Sister de Bréchard, who had been left in charge of the house, had devoted herself with such zeal to the care of the invalids that she was in danger of losing her own health. Towards the end of the month of October the Saint had been obliged to write to her the following words: "I have been told that you are overwhelming yourself with work, that for several nights in succession you never went to bed, that you take no food, that you do all the hardest tasks in the infirmary, and that you then immediately return to chapel in order to help in keeping up the Office. My daughter, my daughter, I do not want you to be so brave. For, look you, what would our Mother say to me if in her absence any evil were to befall her beloved Jeanne-Charlotte? . . . Listen, therefore, to your poor father. Take both the rest and the food that are necessary. Leave a little of the work generously to the others, and do not be so anxious to win all the rewards, for your neighbour will be quite glad to have one or two of these. . . ." Thanks to the care bestowed upon them, the sisters had little by little regained their normal state of health. There was, however, one exception, Sister de Chastel, whose condition became so desperate that the Bishop hastened to the convent in order to administer the Last Sacraments. Whilst he was anointing the sister with the holy oil, she suddenly seemed to awake as from a deep sleep, and gazed around her in wonder. Almost immediately afterwards her condition improved, and in a few days she was well on the way to convalescence.

Consequently, when Mme. de Chantal arrived home, she found all the sisters in good health, and she immediately decided to take up a work which had been one of the first objects of the Order. This was the visitation of the poor. She herself set the example, accompanied by Sister Favre, and made her way into those quarters of Annecy which harboured the poor. It was not long before the town became used to the sight of her figure, passing from house to house, carrying all those things which were necessary for the relief of her new charges, absorbed in prayer and work, and paying no heed to those who passed along the way. The condition of the poor people in those troubled times was wretched in the extreme. Often she would find them lying on the filthiest bedding or on the bare floor, covered with ulcers, infested with vermin, and suffering with

a kind of dogged despair. Without showing a sign of the inner nausea that must have assailed her often, she would clean out their rooms and bedding, dress their sores, administer a few simple remedies, and do all that was possible to alleviate their sufferings. Whenever she found that the consolations of religion were needed, she would report such a case to the priest of the parish, would make ready all that was necessary for his coming, and prepare the poor people for the sacraments they were to receive. It was not long before Mother de Chantal's charity made her as well known among the poor of Annecy as she had been amongst the peasants of Monthelon, and she had the consolation of bringing back many souls to the practice of their religion. Many there were, however, who had no need of such conversion, but were the cause of much edification to the Superioress and her sisters. " These poor people," she related, " were full of love, and moved us to admiration by the virtues which they practised in the midst of their misery, especially by their patience and resignation to the will of God, either for suffering or for death itself: we heard nought but words of grateful affection from these poor, beloved, saintly souls." The people, seeing that the new sisters had chosen our Lady for their patron, had at first called them the Sisters of St Mary; but later, on finding them so devoted to this work of visiting the poor, changed the title to that of Sisters of the Visitation. This was the name for which the ladies themselves had shown a predilection, as we know from a passage in one of the Bishop's letters: " For more than one reason the congregation has desired as its patron the Blessed Virgin of the Visitation."* The Sisters of the Visitation, therefore, they had now become, and even when, at the suggestion of another person, the Saint afterwards took from their lives this particular manner of serving God, they still adhered to the old title of the first days of Annecy.

The main force of St Jane Frances's charity was, of course, her love of God. She worked amongst the poor, not only out of her deep pity for them—which was genuine enough—but because, in obedience to the words of Christ, she saw Jesus in the persons of these sufferers. This fact was drawn explicitly from her by the questioning of one of her sisters. " I assure you, my dear daughter," she replied, " it never entered my mind that I was merely serving creatures. I have always been persuaded that in the persons of these poor invalids I was tending the wounds of Jesus Christ, who was pierced for our sins and covered with more ulcers than some poor creature in the last stages of leprosy."† Mother de Chantal, however, did not take to herself alone these works of mercy, but gave her sisters a share in the merit. Each month two of the nuns

* E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DCXXI, p. 348.

† *Vie et Œuvres de Ste. Chantal*, I, 160.

were appointed as visitors of the sick, and sent out into the town with definite rules and regulations, in order to guard them from any spiritual risks which their labours might entail.

On one occasion two of the sisters, as they were passing the Bishop's residence, were called in to exercise their ministry upon Francis himself, who was suffering from some kind of sore or wound in one of his legs. The anxiety of the sisters to do the best they could for their illustrious patient made them somewhat nervous, and, their hands being unsteady, they unknowingly caused considerable pain to the Saint in the course of their ministrations. This pain he endured without a murmur, but, when the bandaging was finished, he said gently to the sisters: "My daughters, when you are tending the poor, you must make certain that your hands do not tremble and must work more slowly: for when a wound is touched too clumsily, it causes the greatest pain." Later on, when Mother de Chantal and Sister de Bréchard were anxious to give him the help of their more experienced skill, he sent them one of his charmingly playful letters, thanking them for their offer, but refusing it on the grounds of prudence.

During the month of February, 1612, Mother de Chantal fell dangerously ill. On several occasions since the foundation of the Order she had suffered from indifferent health, particularly during her noviciate, when her condition at one time caused the greatest alarm. Now once more she was reduced to the last extremity, and, although Francis called in the most skilful physicians of the neighbourhood, they seemed powerless to effect a cure. Finally, in his anxiety to do all that was possible for such a valuable life, the Bishop summoned to his assistance a Protestant doctor from Geneva, who enjoyed the highest reputation throughout the country, and who had been called in to Mme. de Boisy.* But even this celebrated man was unable to arrest the course of the sickness, and indeed he seemed to have been puzzled at its nature. "I can only see one cause for the malady," he said. "Madame is ill with the love of God, and that is a complaint which I cannot cure." It need scarcely be said that Francis, even in the midst of his anxiety for Mother de Chantal, was keenly preoccupied with the thought of converting to the ancient faith this Genevan doctor who had come to help them, and that the invalid herself shared this anxiety. Writing to M. Philippe de Quoëx, he says: "It is by the intermediary of this poor doctor, who has not been able to cure our Mother and whom I have not been able to cure, that I send you these lines. . . . Our good invalid would willingly give her life for the spiritual health of her physician, and I, poor, feeble pastor, what would I not give for the salvation of this unfortunate sheep! I would give my skin to

* E. N., Tom. XV, note iii, p. 168.

clothe him, my blood to anoint his wounds, and my life on earth to safeguard him from eternal death."*

It is practically certain that one of the causes retarding Mother de Chantal's health was, humanly speaking, her intense love of God and her desire to submit herself in all things to the divine will. This assertion is supported by what she herself, in an unusual moment of expansion, was heard to say on a later occasion. " I knew well enough that that prescription of the doctor's would do me harm ; but I did not dwell upon the matter. Until I was ordered to say what I knew would be bad for me, I was very scrupulous about interfering with my treatment, after having given myself to God and to obedience. I would much rather have died through submission and abandonment to his will, than have gone on living through my own care for myself." Francis himself encouraged her in this attitude of submission. " Place yourself at the foot of the Cross," he said, " and remain there humbly, to receive the merits of the precious blood that flows therefrom, like a little crevice in the rock of Calvary. And do it with great confidence in the divine mercy." In spite of the Bishop's anxiety for the health of one so dear to him and so necessary for the well-being of his little community, he, also, was keeping his will in complete accord with that of his divine Master. In the letter from which we have already quoted he writes : " She is very ill, this good mother of ours, and my thoughts are much perturbed about her malady ; but if the sovereign Architect of this new congregation wills to remove from the foundations the stone which he has laid there, in order to place it in the heavenly Jerusalem, he knows well what he wills to do with the rest of the building. With the help of this thought I remain in peace."†

Several days afterwards word was brought to the Bishop that the invalid had taken a marked turn for the worse and that the doctors had given up all hope. In spite of his resignation, the news came as a terrible blow to the Saint, for so much was centred in the life of Mother de Chantal, both for himself and for the welfare of the Visitation. Nevertheless, as he made his way to the convent, there was no outward expression of the grief that lay in his heart. When he was ushered into her presence, he said quietly to her : " Well, my child, you are quite willing, are you not, that the will of God should be done in all things ? "—" Yes, most certainly," she replied. " Perhaps," he went on to say, " God intends to be satisfied with our attempt, just as he was satisfied with Abraham's intention in the sacrifice of Isaac. If it is his pleasure that we should leave our enterprise but half finished, at least his goodness will have seen that we have set ourselves with good will to the task which he had suggested to us. Blessed be his eternal will."

* *Ibid.*, Lettre DCCLIV. † *Ibid.*, p. 169.

On the Bishop's return to his home, he found his brother Louis awaiting him. During the course of conversation the latter could not refrain from expressing his anxiety as to the effect of Mother de Chantal's death upon the fate of the new congregation. "My dear brother," answered the Saint, "God is a master who is all powerful and infinitely good. Everything is in his hands, and he has need of no one. From the very stones he can raise up children to Abraham."

It might have been thought from these words that Francis felt himself at the end of his resources in this great trouble. But, resigned though he was to the divine will, he also knew well that at times God wishes that his children should be importunate in the expression of the desires which lie within their hearts. And so, when all human remedies had failed, he resolved to attempt a cure suggested to him by his faith. Urged on by his devotion to S. Charles Borromeo, he took a little powder from the relics of the Saint, and mingling this with water gave it to Mother de Chantal, at the same time making a vow to go in pilgrimage to the shrine at Milan. No sooner had the invalid tasted this liquid than she gave vent to a great sigh, such as seemed to those around her to be a last effort of her worn-out strength; then she opened her eyes, and said to Francis de Sales: "Father, I shall not die. I feel that I am cured and am quite well, thanks to God and to his Saint." Confident in the truth of what he heard, the Bishop's only answer was to begin the recitation of the Te Deum, in which he was joined by all the sisters who were witnesses of the miracle. In a few days Mother de Chantal completely regained her health, and was able to devote herself with all her usual thoroughness to the duties of her work.

It soon became evident that, on account of the rapid growth of the little community and of the increasing number of those who desired to enter it, the House of the Gallery would no longer be sufficient for the needs of the Order. Consequently Mme. de Chantal purchased another house, situated near the lake and not far from the church of S. Dominic. To this new home the community was transferred on October 30, 1612, there being in all fourteen professed religious, five novices, and one out-sister. It was in this spot that the Reverend Mother intended to found the first convent of the Order, it being her design to purchase several small houses in the immediate neighbourhood and to unite them in one great establishment. Here, however, to her astonishment she was once more to encounter opposition. For the magistrates, urged on by certain interested individuals, protested to the Duke of Nemours' officials that the proposed erection of a convent in this quarter would be harmful to the neighbourhood by the consequent restriction of its commerce and business. At the same time the members

of the adjoining Dominican priory became alarmed lest the proximity of another religious house should be prejudicial to their own interests. The Bishop, however, was not to be deterred from the fulfilment of his plans by these protests. In opposition to the action of the officials and magistrates of the town, he made appeal to the Duke of Nemours himself, and the latter, after listening to the arguments on both sides, gave his decision in favour of the Visitation. The hostility of the Dominican house was much more difficult to overcome, but eventually by means of tact, prudence, and a spirit of accommodation this opposition was also removed, and the purchase of the desired buildings was effected on a provisory understanding. It is related that in the sequence Mme. de Chantal took a characteristic revenge on one of her bitterest opponents by nursing him with the utmost devotion through a long and painful malady. "This man," she would remark, "deserves the greatest compassion at our hands. He is filled with prejudice against us, and we must cure him of this complaint by dint of kindness."

From the very beginning of the Order's foundation the Bishop had watched over the spiritual life of its members with the most assiduous care. At times indeed he was prevented from giving them all the attention, which he knew to be needful, by the cares of his diocese and by the heaviness of his correspondence, not to mention the composition of his book upon the Divine Love. But whenever he had any time to spare, he would devote it to the sisters, helping them by numerous instructions upon the spiritual life. "Even during the bad season—the times of snow and rain," writes Mother Adrienne Fichet, in her *History of the Gallery*, "he would never fail to visit them two or three times a week and even oftener."

It was from these same instructions that was afterwards compiled the work known as the *Spiritual Conferences*. Realizing the value of the discourses committed to them and anxious to have them always at hand for the purpose of meditation, the nuns decided that after each conference they would perpetuate in writing all that they could remember of the matter put before them, and would also strive to preserve even the exact form in which this matter was expressed. The Conferences, it may be observed, had also a certain historical value, because it was during their course that "were established many of the practices which passed later into the Constitutions of the Visitation."* Mother Adrienne Fichet gives us a charming sketch of the circumstances under which one of these instructions was delivered in the early days of the Gallery. "On the feast of S. Laurence in the year 1612," she writes, "our blessed father came to see our venerable Foundress, accompanied, as always, by M. Michel Favre, his chaplain, for he never came to the house

* E. N., Préface—Dom B. Mackey, O.S.B.—Tom. VI, p. ix.

without the latter. All the sisters went down into the orchard of the fountain. A seat was placed for him under the trellis close to the steps leading to the garden. The sisters sat on the ground around him." It is related that on this occasion a thunderstorm, accompanied by heavy rain, interrupted the conference, and both speaker and audience were obliged to take refuge in a sheltered gallery in order to continue their instruction.

It seemed that at first the Bishop was opposed to the recording of his familiar and unrehearsed discourses to the little community, asserting as his reason that the nuns would find all his teaching in the book on the Love of God, which he was then writing.* But his opposition was not construed as being an absolute prohibition. In the earlier conferences it was Mother Adrienne Fichet then who fulfilled the rôle of reporter. Later on the work passed into the hands of Mother Claude Agnes Joly de la Roche. Of this sister's labours St Jane Frances afterwards wrote : " Our institute owes to her an everlasting debt for having undertaken the task of collecting the conferences of our venerable father and a considerable number of his sermons, God having endowed her with such a wonderful memory that she could repeat word for word what our good prelate had preached several days after having heard him. And it is to her diligence that the public is indebted for this work, whence all spiritual people may draw and enjoy such pure doctrinal devotion."†

When Mother Adrienne Fichet left Annecy in 1620, the work of recording the conferences devolved upon Mother Marie Marguerite Michel, who was similarly endowed with an accurate memory and great diligence. Not content, however, with relying on her own powers, this religious always submitted her edition of the instructions to the other sisters of the community. We are told that there was very seldom any need to make additions to what she had written.

It is impossible to supply here a detailed account of the conferences ; it will therefore suffice to give the Abbé Hamon's able summary of their contents as literally as possible.

After mentioning the Saint's zeal in caring for the spiritual welfare of the sisters, his biographer continues : " He would often recommend them to maintain a constant equanimity of soul, submitting calmly to the divine Providence amid the difficulties of life and the shrinkings of nature ; to interrogate their hearts at certain moments of the day in order to make sure that they were able in all truthfulness to say, ' I live now, not I ; but Christ liveth in me ' ; to immolate ceaselessly their own will on the altar of the will of

* E. N., Préface—Dom B. Mackey, O.S.B.—Tom. VI, p. ix.

† Cf. *Vie de IV des premières Mères de l'Ordre de la Visitation*, par la Mère de Chaugy. See also preface to the *Entretiens*, by Dom Mackey, E.N., p. xii.

God, and this to such an extent as to leave unfinished the dotting of an *i*, the formation of one single letter, the completion of a sentence, at the very moment when obedience called them; to consult God in all things just as a child consults its father; to take all things, great and small, as coming from his fatherly hand; to do gently and obligingly all the services that their neighbours might desire of them; and finally to entrust themselves completely, in all that concerned their health of body, to those whose duty it was to look after them.

"Passing from these general counsels to practical details he advised them to place their souls entirely in God's keeping as soon as they awoke in the morning, and to keep them there during the rest of the day by the fervour of their love. He gave them subjects for their meditation—the first exercise of the day—and chose these to harmonize with the feasts and seasons of the year; he made the object of each meditation clear, teaching the sisters to employ everything therein for the correction of their natural defects and inclinations . . .; and he pointed out the means of obtaining the desired end, the same method, as a matter of fact, which he had expounded in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. He insisted that all should follow this method, and he kept Mme. de Chantal herself subject to it for no less than seven years. It was not until after this long test that, yielding to the impulse of the grace which inspired this chosen soul, he allowed her the use of a more sublime form of prayer, by which she kept herself simply in the sight of God and in the realization of her own nothingness, completely given up to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without seeking to produce one act rather than another, resting peacefully in Jesus Christ, and allowing him without let or hindrance to accomplish within her all that he willed.

"From prayer the saintly doctor passed on to the sacrifice of the Mass, which he depicted to the nuns as the very sum of devotional exercises, the heart of real piety, the central act of Christianism; and he taught them to unite their homage with that of the whole Church triumphant and militant, which, in this sublime mystery, associates itself with our Lord, in order to give glory, with him, in him, and through him, to the Holy Trinity. When the Saint treated of the recitation of the Holy Office, he recommended the sisters to bring together within themselves all the powers of their souls in order fittingly to bless the name of God and to tell the glories of his eternal goodness, which can never be praised enough. In his instruction upon the examination of conscience and confession he taught them to remain prostrate in spirit at the feet of Jesus crucified; to use their faith in representing to themselves the outpouring of his blood upon them for the washing away of their sins; and to leave

the sacred tribunal bearing within them the precious treasure of a contrite heart, more closely united to God by the bonds of a new love. When he dealt with the subject of Holy Communion, he bade them approach the altar with a heart full of faith, hope, and charity, and afterwards behave in such a manner that everyone, on seeing them, might recognize the signs of the presence of God. Finally, with regard to their general conduct, he explained how they ought to pass their days like so many living sacrifices, fully consecrated to Jesus Christ, offering up to him every moment of their existence, even the times of sleep and recreation, and giving up their souls entirely to the divine love by frequent aspirations or upliftings of the heart towards the Sovereign Good. 'For,' he would say, 'these holy exercises, carrying our souls towards God, also carry with them all our actions and make them pleasing in his eyes.' It must be remembered, however, that in the case of these exercises of piety, as in that of prayer, he insisted that they should always have a definite relation to the reformation of the heart by the correction of faults and the practice of virtues. 'It is necessary,' he used to say, 'that everyone in this house should allow themselves to be trained, corrected, and polished, and should establish themselves firmly in humility, in the perfect subjugation of self-will and in detachment from all things. Thence you will rise to the practice of virtues; and in the choice of these you will prefer not the most striking but the most humble—the little arts of gentleness, of patience, of charity to your neighbour, of obligingness to others in all things save sin; finally the virtue of modesty, in looks, in speech, in bearing, so that the witness of your conduct will be forced to say: *These are indeed the true spouses of Jesus Christ.*'

"In order to encourage the sisters in the practice of these virtues their director used to impress upon them certain maxims on which he set great store. '*All things work together unto good to them that love God:* our difficulties serve to make us humble; our afflictions, our crosses, and our persecutions gain for us an increase of never-ending happiness. All is vanity except eternity. Each day brings us closer to that eternity, and already it is very nigh to us: if only that eternity be happy, what does it matter should our passage thereto, which lasts but a minute, be somewhat stormy? . . . Knowing that our sufferings of two or three days produce eternal consolations, can we not endure them with good grace? Since God is our father—a father so loving that he watches continually over us, and does not permit even a hair to fall from our head without his knowledge—how is it that we are not always preoccupied with the task of loving and serving him?'

"It was another of his maxims that the servants of God should keep their hearts free from every creature, from all attachment to

places, persons, times, and even from particular and favourite acts of virtue, in order to unite themselves solely to the will of God, and only seek their consolation, their repose, their glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, at the foot of which all should destroy their whims and dislikes, their passions and their bents, their imaginations and their sensual powers. 'For,' he would say, 'we must suffer much for God, before enjoying God.' . . .

"In later years he once cried out: 'Why, think you, my children, has God put you into this world, and, above all, called you to the religious state, except that you may be holocausts to his divine majesty, victims consummated each day in his holy love? And this obliges you to destroy in yourselves everything that is opposed to perfection and to union with God, as far as you can, but especially all self-love, all self-will, the seeking after honour, the satisfaction of the senses. You must, then, live in dying and die in living, and above all you must never use whatever is in you for any other object but the service and the glory of him who has chosen you particularly, that you may be utterly dedicated and consecrated to his service. To help you effect all this, his mercy gives to you his Holy Spirit, which dwells within you while you are in his grace, in order that you may be aided by his light and his love, and that everything within you may work for his glory.'*

"It is in the *Spiritual Conferences* that the Saint expounds to his daughters three laws of the spiritual life, which, in his opinion, 'are of unparalleled usefulness, and peculiarly fitted to produce a great peace and sweetness in the soul, because they spring from love alone. The first is to do all things for God and nothing for self, and this not only with regard to temporal matters, but also with regard to spirituality and the progress of the soul towards perfection. 'How happy we should be,' he said, 'if we did everything for God! For his love is without bounds towards the soul which reposes in him.' The second law is not to fail in the accomplishment of the least of our religious duties during those times of spiritual privation and dryness, of revolt and sacrifice, through which God chooses we should pass. 'A single act performed with dryness of soul is worth more,' he said, 'than several that are accompanied with great unction, because it is done with a stronger love, although it is not so emotional or so agreeable.' The third law is to bless God equally in the midst of difficulties and in times of success; and the Saint illustrates his law by the example of Job, quoting the hymn of love which the latter sang on every occasion. . . . *We have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil. . . . Blessed be the name of the Lord!* 'How greatly indeed,' says

* Quoted from the *Histoire inédite de la Fondation du Premier Monastère de Paris*. Sept. 1619. Appendice C, Tom. VI, p. 453.

Francis, 'was this saintly soul beloved of God! May it be given to us to do likewise in sorrow and in joy, singing ever the same refrain of love—*Blessed be the name of the Lord!*—and always to the melody of the same untroubled calm.'

"To these general laws the experienced master of the spiritual life adds special rules for each virtue. With regard to God, he first of all demands of his daughters that they should give themselves up entirely with their wills and their affections to the good pleasure of their Lord, in order to will only what he wills and to find repose in him with confidence and love. According to his teaching, the sisters were to place their wills in the hands of God, so as to accept with equal readiness afflictions or consolations, sickness or health, poverty or riches, contempt or honour, disgrace or glory, and even to prefer privation to possession, suffering to pleasure, if such should be, by so little more, the will of God. 'The saints of heaven,' he said, 'are in such union with the will of God that, were it ever so slightly the pleasure of God that they should go down to hell, they would leave Paradise at once to enter the place of woe. Similarly, on all occasions we should let ourselves be led by the will of God, without any preoccupation as to the agreeable or disagreeable consequences thereof, assured, as we are, that nothing could be sent to us by his fatherly love, from which we cannot draw profit, if we have confidence in him.' This abandonment of self to God must be accompanied, according to the Saint, by simplicity, that excellent virtue which not only considers God alone in all things, without thought of pleasing creatures or care as to what they say and think, but which moreover occupies itself simply and solely with loving God, without troubling itself as to the ways and means of loving him, as if, in order to educate oneself in love, there was no other art or secret but just to love. . . .'

"With regard to the virtues to be exercised towards those around them Francis desires the sisters to love their neighbour more than themselves, even so far as to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others and to prefer others in all things to self, according to the precept and example of Jesus Christ, who said: 'A new commandment give I unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another'; and who then gave himself up as a sacrifice for our sakes. In all their relations, therefore, the sisters were to show great cordiality towards everyone, and especially that gentle affability, equally removed on the one hand from an excess of severity that is disagreeable and, on the other, from a familiarity that is destructive of self-respect; they must accede in a kindly manner to the will of others, characterizing their conversation with cheerfulness tempered by moderation, that indefinable graciousness that is so full of charm; they must put aside gloom

and melancholy while at the same time avoiding anything that savours of frivolity; and must patiently bear with the defects of others without giving an inkling that these defects are perceived. Finally, they must abstain from any such preferences of friendship as would be likely to cause jealousy. It is true, indeed, that there arise within us, in spite of ourselves, feelings of aversion against certain people who do not suit us, whose mentality, character, and manners are repugnant to our tastes; but the saintly writer teaches us not to take any notice of these dislikes, and desires us to welcome such people with none the less kindness, to speak to them none the less graciously, and even to esteem them the more; for there is greater worth in one who struggles against a faulty nature than in one who enjoys a happy disposition without having to strive for it. With regard to superiors the Saint demands of his daughters a universal, affectionate, prompt, and constant obedience. *Universal*, because true obedience has an insatiable desire to be commanded in all things, because obedience increases the merits of the smallest actions, and because there is no virtue where there is no obedience; it submits not only the will, but even the judgement, giving approval to the thing commanded and considering it better than anything else, because it is innocent of that secret pride which values its own way of thinking and prefers it to that of others. *Affectionate*, it submits, not out of fear, but out of love; it sees God in the person who commands, disputes neither the wisdom nor the motives of the order, does not worry about success, but sets to work at once, sufficient for the moment to know that it is obeying. *Constant*, it vows its entire life to submission, and finds therein its joy.

"Elsewhere in his instructions the Bishop took care to speak to his daughters about the virtue of modesty, which in the religious life should find its special home: modesty of bearing, opposed to affectation and levity; modesty of language, which only speaks of things that are becoming, and speaks of these in a quiet tone of voice; modesty of dress, which consists in simplicity joined with tidiness; modesty of the soul, which keeps imagination, mind, and heart in a calm, recollected state.

"The Bishop is no less careful to give a warning against those strange whims and instabilities which are one of the greatest afflictions of mankind. 'God,' he says, 'has given man the power of reason as his guide; and nevertheless but few men allow themselves to be ruled by it. They follow their passions, their fancy, the changeableness of their moods; what pleases to-day displeases to-morrow; the same person is loved or hated according to the humour of the moment; a man is happy or melancholy without knowing why. . . . This is not the Christian spirit; the irregularity of events ought not to bring about within our souls an irregularity of humour.

Amidst the changeableness of accidental happenings we ourselves should remain unchangeable, content to serve God constantly, courageously, undauntedly, without falter or fail. It is in the peace of a heart always the same that God reveals himself, just as, when the lake is very calm and the waters untouched by the breeze, the sky of a fair night is so well pictured with its stars, that in the mirror which lies at our feet we see the perfect image of the beauty which reigns above.'

" Finally and above all the saintly Founder preaches to the nuns the virtue of humility, not only for each one in particular, but for their Order in general. ' The daughters of the Visitation,' he said, ' will speak always very humbly of their little congregation, and will prefer all the others to it so far as regards honour and esteem : nevertheless they will prefer it to any other as regards their own love, testifying willingly, when occasion may arise, how happily they live in this vocation. Thus each of us prefers his own country to that of others in love, not in esteem ; each mariner loves the vessel in which he sails better than the others, although these be richer and better geared. Let us admit frankly that other congregations are better and more excellent, but not, all the same, more lovable or desirable for us ourselves.' "

We cannot do better than resume in the words of the Carthusian monk who wrote *La Vie Contemplative.* " According to his own words, St Francis de Sales, in founding the Visitation, desired ' to give to God daughters of prayer, souls so schooled to the inner life, that they would be found worthy to serve his infinite majesty and to adore him in spirit and in truth.'

" He has ' established it on Mount Calvary for the service of Jesus Christ crucified, in imitation of whom all the sisters must crucify their senses, inclinations, passions, imaginations, aversions, and humours, for the love of the Father in heaven.'

" The service and the love of Jesus crucified—of the heavenly Spouse—the service of the love of our Spouse—these words come again and again from the Founder's pen ; we feel that the great preoccupation of his heart was to give to our Saviour souls perpetually united by love to his sacrifice of love, in order to receive the fruits thereof, and to communicate those fruits to the world in the fragrance of their virtues.

" To offer to God souls in which he could find favour—souls ever ready to receive the outpourings of his divine charity—such then was the object of him who himself wrote so beautifully of the love of God ; such was the service which he strove to render to the Church. Without any appearance of external severity—for he wished to make his institute accessible to all ' generous souls ' desirous ' of devoting themselves to the perfection of divine love,'

whatever might be their age or the weakness of their health—he opens to his daughters the wide horizons of utter sacrifice and immolation of self; but he guides them thither by laws so full of gentleness and stamped with such admirable wisdom that, if the weak find nought therein that is above their strength, the strong find nothing either which is beneath their courage."*

Under the impulse of the Bishop's teaching and the wisdom of his guidance the sisters made rapid progress in the spiritual life. "Amongst these pure and good souls," relates Mother de Chantal, "there was no other rivalry but as to who should be the last in her own esteem and the first in fervour and love." It need scarcely be said that, in writing thus, she unconsciously drew her own portrait. She condescended humbly to the lowest tasks, took her turn as kitchen maid, and gave exact obedience to the sister who was in charge.

In a short time news began to spread quietly through the town of the life that was being led behind the doors of the new convent, and opinion veered round from a thinly veiled contempt, such as had originally greeted the foundation, to an almost universal admiration. That which Francis wrote later, in 1612, was already true of the first convent. "The edification which our houses give every day," he wrote to Mother de Chantal, "is a proof of the intention of the Holy Spirit, for it is wonderful to see how greatly consideration for the devout life is increasing, thanks to the conversations of our sisters, whom I see gaining ground every day, becoming more attached to purity and sanctity of life. . . . Several ladies, who were strangers to us, and who visited the sisters, went away with tears in their eyes and with intense appreciation."† Some people came from Lyons to see what had been described to them as the marvel of the age. After having interviewed the Bishop, Mother de Chantal and their pupils in the spiritual life, these persons took their leave, saying that all which had been said of the Visitation was an under-estimate of the truth, and that it would be a blessing for their own city to possess a house of these saintly nuns.

At the beginning of the year 1613 the Bishop sent the nuns a novel New Year's gift, under the title of *Défi sacré*—a challenge of piety. This consisted partly of a letter for the whole community, in which he recommended the practice of six elevations towards God during the times that were not especially dedicated to exercises of piety, in order that the sisters might conform themselves to the word which God spoke to Abraham: *Walk before me and be perfect.* Francis suggested a fine or penalty for omission in the performance

* *La Vie Contemplative* par un Religieux Chartreux (Imprimerie de Parkminster), p. 127.

† E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCXI, p. 115.

of this exercise—the recitation of the verse, *Beata viscera Mariae Virginis quae portaverunt aeterni Patris filium;* and as models or protectors of the practice he proposed St Anthony, St Bruno, and St Francis of Paula. In addition to the general letter he also sent a note for each sister, recommending some particular practice such as preparation for the Divine Office and close attention to its recitation, or a spiritual colloquy with some chosen saint or with the angel guardian, or the application of the mind to one's self in such a way as to leave no room for the observation and censure of neighbours, or pity and silence with regard to the faults of others. Then, as in the general letter, would follow the penalty for each failure, and the model for each virtue. These little notes, so simple and naïve at first sight, were productive of great fruit and succeeded in rousing to a still higher level the fervour of the community.

It would seem, from one story that is told of these days, that the convent was not altogether free from somewhat exciting and disagreeable events, the mere possibility of which shows how disorderly were the times and how greatly the town of Annecy was in need of an efficient police. "A young nobleman had fallen passionately in love with a lady who had been led by the spirit of God to enter the convent of the Visitation. This gentleman, convinced that she had only taken this step at the instance of Francis de Sales, came to see the latter and launched forth upon him every imaginable insult. The Saint listened to the speaker with admirable restraint, and then said: 'Sir, if you will kindly be patient enough to consider this matter carefully, you will see that I have taken no part in advising this lady, but have merely approved the choice which she has made.' The young man, blinded by his passion, only went on to shout the louder. 'Sir,' said Francis de Sales, 'you would greatly oblige me by voicing in a lower tone any insults you desire to make me hear. I assure you I will carry every one of them to the foot of the crucifix, and that not a soul will know anything about them.'—'I should be very glad,' retorted the young man, 'to let everybody learn and appreciate how little I think of you.'—'I myself would be quite satisfied with that,' answered the humble prelate, 'if their contempt for me would increase their respect for you.' Eventually the nobleman ended the interview by declaring that he would break down the convent gates, would abduct the lady, and would then set the place on fire. To this menace Francis retorted with vigour: 'Sir, you have said enough and more than enough, and will find yourself unable to carry out your threats. It is in the power of the just God to bring your evil deeds to naught.' Thereupon the gentleman left the house. Francis immediately sent orders to the Reverend Mother to give the young lady a bedroom as far away from the streets as possible, to keep lighted lamps near the windows,

and, after taking these precautions, to have confidence in God without any fear. The nobleman's retainers did their best to serve their master's desires, and from eleven o'clock at night until two in the morning kept up an attack upon the convent, beating at the gates, breaking the windows, and shouting out every kind of insult. Early the next morning news of these happenings was brought to the Bishop. 'Let us thank God,' he said; 'for in the whole of this adventure there has been more noise than harm. There is only one thing, however, which you do not know, and that is that the young man is now more angry with the lady than with us; for he thought that she would at least put her head out of the window, begging him to withdraw. He attributes her silence to contempt, and is so disgusted thereat as to send me a message to the effect that her pride has disillusioned him and he desires her no more.'"*

It was about this time that the Visitation lost a newly acquired friend. A certain Baroness de Mirabelle had for a long time been ill with paralysis. After numerous requests on her part, the Bishop gave leave for the sisters to visit her and give her what comfort was possible, a favour which she received with great gratitude. "It is as if," she said, "our Lord had come to visit me with his servants." Out of gratitude for the care thus bestowed upon her, she bequeathed her property to the Visitation, but, on her death, the will was contested by her mother, Mme. de Bellegarde. The Bishop was very averse to litigation of this sort, and particularly desirous that his daughters of the Visitation should learn complete detachment from the things of this world. He was unwilling to contest the matter with any ardour. Eventually, by an act of arbitration, the sisters renounced all claim to the legacy in general, receiving as compensation property to the value of some 5,500 florins.†

During the summer of 1613 Mme. de Chantal received news of the death of her father-in-law, Baron de Chantal, in whose house she had endured such difficult times during her widowhood. Francis, realizing her obligations towards her children, the Baron's sole heirs, deemed it necessary to send her once again into Burgundy to attend to the settlement of the family property. On this occasion, as before, Mother de Chantal made the journey in the same spirit of religious recollection and fidelity to her rule as if she had been living in her convent. The Baron's housekeeper, who had formerly treated Mme. de Chantal with such animosity, now continued to show a regrettable consistency of conduct, and took every opportunity of displaying her ancient enmity. But the Saint, who might have dismissed her on the spot, was equally consistent in charity, and returned good for evil, treating the woman with courtesy and kindness, and even

* *Année*, June 26.

† E. N., Tom. XV, note ii, p. 328, and Tom. XVI, notes i and ii, p. 14.

inviting her to sit for her meals at the same table. As the late Baron's affairs were in the greatest disorder, it took five weeks of continued work to unravel the tangle and to deal with the rough peasants, who strove by lying and trickery to evade their debts. In the midst of all this worry Mme. de Chantal was never seen to lose her calmness of demeanour or to show the slightest impatience under provocation: and the unruffled gentleness of her speech was an index of the constant peace of soul which she had made her habit. In conformity with the counsels of her director, she settled each matter in its turn, calmly and smoothly, without worrying about what had gone before or was likely to follow.

On returning home from her journey, about the end of the summer of 1613, Mother de Chantal again fell seriously ill, and again her life was in danger. But the Bishop, after offering up fervent prayers, made her kiss the relic of St Blaise, which was preserved in the church of St Maurice, and she received the grace of an instantaneous cure. Whereupon one of the sisters, in her admiration for their Founder, remarked that it hardly seemed worth while to bring in the aid of a saint from Armenia, and a fourth-century saint at that, when the Bishop of Geneva could have worked the cure by himself. When this observation came to the ears of Francis, it grieved him to the point of tears, and he severely reprimanded the sister before the whole community. As a penance he bade her ask pardon of the holy martyr, and ordered her to fast on the eve of his feast for the next three years.

It was about this time, towards the end of the year 1613, that Francis, anxious to obtain for his institution the protection of the ruling powers, petitioned Princess Margaret, the daughter of the Duke of Savoy, to take the Institute of the Visitation under her patronage. This suggestion was favourably received at the Court. On December 13, the Duke wrote from Turin: "The enterprise undertaken by these good ladies, to lead a life of perfection in our State, gives us much pleasure, for we have great hopes in the efficacy of their prayers. The Infanta Duchess of Mantua, my daughter, is filled with joy at the thought of being chosen as the protectress of such a virtuous company and saintly congregation, the service of which we will have at heart with very special care, urged thereto by the signal esteem in which we hold your person and by the virtue which we have been told shines forth in those good ladies for the edification of the province. Bid them to pray God on our behalf; it is a thing we desire, as also to have a share every day in your own prayers."* The Princess therefore declared by letters patent, transmitted to the Senate, that for the present and the future she took

* E. N., Tom. XVI, p. 391. See also pp. 401 and 402, and Lettre CMXXXIV, p. 104.

the congregation under her protection, and willed that the Visitation should be favoured and supported throughout the States of His Royal Highness the Duke, her father.

Up to this time the nuns had used, as convents, houses which had been originally built as private residences. These were by no means suited to the needs of a religious community. Consequently the Bishop was now planning a proper conventual building, constructed especially for the nuns and worthy in every way of being the first house of the Order. It was, however, a difficult matter to arrange, and there were many obstacles in the way. It was necessary to obtain some land belonging to the Dominicans. These were to receive in exchange a ground held at the time by the College, and the College in its turn was to be persuaded to accept suitable financial compensation from the sisters. At first sight it seemed almost impossible to carry through such complicated negotiations; but the Bishop persevered with his characteristic tact and ability, and before long the affair was brought to a successful conclusion. In this he was greatly helped by the Dukes of Savoy and Nemours and by the Duchess of Mantua, who made it known to the interested parties that they fully approved of the proposed exchanges and would regard the consent of those concerned as a signal favour. The result was, as we have said, that the interchange of property took place in due course. On September 14, 1614, therefore, the first stone was laid by Baroness Claude Françoise de la Croix, who acted as proxy for the Duchess of Mantua; prior to this ceremony Mass was sung by the Bishop, who afterwards blessed the stone according to the usual custom.

The building once begun, however, a certain amount of irritating opposition was shown by various individuals, who seem for the most part to have been irresponsible people. Stones were thrown at the workmen, tools were hidden, material was scattered about, and the foundations were flooded by the inletting of water from a neighbouring canal. One night the Bishop was informed that a man, armed with an axe, was breaking down a kind of embankment, which had been erected to protect the foundations from flooding. Francis went to the spot immediately, and without showing any sign of anger, without even raising his voice, asked the intruder to cease from his work of destruction. As no notice was taken either of the Bishop's presence or protests, the latter went up to the man, quietly wrested the axe from his hands, and then proceeded to reprimand him with gentle authority. The workman, abashed by this treatment, retired, but not before the Bishop's chaplain, who was a witness of the whole scene, cried out to him: "After this, come to Sales, and see whether you will get any letters of recommendation."—"Why, certainly," rejoined Francis, "certainly we will give him his letters, and very

willingly." Then, turning to his chaplain, he added, "And you, Sir, what have you done with the maxims of the Gospel?"

That the Bishop had found it no easy task to restrain his indignation on this occasion is evident from what he told St Jane Frances de Chantal when he told her of the incident, for he confessed that he had felt deeply stirred, and had had to take a firm grip upon himself in order to preserve his calm. In the meanwhile the villain of the piece went about boasting that he had succeeded in getting the Bishop into a rage. The latter was informed of this by a friend, who wrote to ask in confidence if the statement was true. "Really," answered Francis, "I laughed heartily when I read in your letter that you had been told I had been put into a rage. . . . If he who made a story of my wrath was no angrier than I, you would have no cause for anxiety. I beg you, when he returns to you, embrace him on my behalf and give him a double dose of charity. For I confess that he was not altogether wrong. I was moved indeed; but I held back my feelings and have confessed my weakness to our dear mother, who on this occasion uttered no word of anger any more than I did. It seems to me that these good folks delight to give her frequent opportunities of mortification which she drinks with avidity. And yet what harm had we done to this fellow? Alas! our mother and I only desire to rear a little hive in which to lodge our poor bees, and these in turn only desire to gather honey on the sacred and heavenly hills, and take no thought of the grandeur or the adornment of their hive."

Francis, however, was not concentrating all his attention on the building of this one house. He had received an invitation from Mgr. de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons, to found a convent of the new Order in that city, and this invitation was supported by the wishes of many influential people. For this task the Bishop desired none but the willing, and he proceeded to sound the dispositions of those among the sisters whom he thought fitted for the proposed foundation. From all he received the same answer: they only desired to obey; having resolved to die to the world and to themselves, they only intended to live for God, and to will naught but what he willed. Assured of the spirit of his daughters, he then sought for the approval and consent of the parents, in which matter he does not seem to have encountered any great difficulty. Consequently, on January 26, 1615, he despatched the new colony to its destination under the charge of Mother de Chantal, sending with her Mothers Favre, de Chastel, and de Blonay, with several sisters who had not yet made their profession.

The nuns arrived at Lyons on February 1, and straightway were taken to a house which had been prepared for them in the rue Griffon. The Archbishop, who was then a deputy in the States

General, was unable to preside over their installation, but the ceremony took place on the morrow with great solemnity, and on that same day four ladies presented themselves for reception and were accepted.

Several miraculous events marked the early days of the institution at Lyons. Probably the most remarkable of these was the incident of the change of title in documents connected with the foundation. Prior to his invitation to the Bishop of Geneva to send Mother de Chantal to Lyons, Mgr. de Marquemont had intended to found in the rue Griffon a community on somewhat similar lines. The Archbishop wrote a petition, asking the royal approval for the new Order under the title of the Institute of the Presentation, and letters patent were made out approving the design under the same denomination. The institution itself, meanwhile, failed, and the house of the rue Griffon was handed over to the nuns of the Visitation. It was now necessary to have the former letters patent made out in the new name. But to the astonishment of the Archbishop, when he consulted the documents which he already possessed, he found that, in place of the word *Presentation*, there was written clearly and without any sign of alteration the title *Visitation*. Moreover, on referring to his own petition, he found the same marvellous change there: yet he was absolutely sure that he had written *Presentation*, and could have had no reason for doing otherwise, since, at the moment of composing the document, he had had no intention of inviting the Visitation nuns from Annecy.*

Although at first it looked as if things were to run smoothly for the community at Lyons, it was not very long before it encountered the usual opposition. At this time the house depended almost solely upon the resources of Mme. d'Auxerre, a pious lady who had joined the new institution: her relatives, fearing that all her money would pass to the convent, took measures which resulted in the seizure of her property, at the same time spreading abroad all sorts of calumnies against the community. The consequence was that the convent now entered upon a time of dire poverty, and the sisters were several times in need of the merest necessities of life. On one occasion, when Mme. de Chantal found that there was absolutely no food in the house, she went down on her knees and offered up an *Our Father* that God would give to his children their daily bread. Soon after this example of her trust in Providence, a stranger came to the door of the convent, placed the sum of eighty crowns in her hands, and then departed, after telling her that he who sent the offering desired the favour of her prayers on his behalf. On another occasion, when

* For further details see E. N. Tom. XVI, Appendice III, p. 418. This account of the founding of the Visitation at Lyons differs in some respects from that of M. Hamon.

they needed a ciborium for the Blessed Sacrament, Mme. de Chantal again had recourse to prayer, begging our Lord to take care of himself just as he took care of his daughters. Again the prayer was answered: a stranger came to the convent, bearing with him a silver-gilt ciborium and asking them to make use of it at once.

During all this time, as can be imagined, the thought and prayers of Francis de Sales followed Mother de Chantal and her companions in their new work. At the very beginning, when they were leaving Annecy, the Bishop had given to Sister de Blonay seven notes, with directions that each day one of these was to be given to the Mother Superior. It is impossible to quote them in full here, but there is one which exemplifies his constant devotion to the angel guardians of places and countries. "Go forward on your way, my very dear mother, my daughter. Our angels here are watching over you and your little flock and cannot abandon you, since you are only abandoning the place of their protection and the persons under their care, in order not to abandon the will of him for whose will they esteem themselves happy to leave so often their own heavenly home. The angels yonder, who are awaiting you, will send their protection forth to meet you, and look with love upon you as you travel towards their land, because you have only at heart to co-operate with their holy ministry.

"Keep your heart in all courage, for, since your heart belongs to God, God will be your courage. Go forward then, my daughter, go forward with the numberless blessings which your father gives you, and know that never will he fail to pour forth, in every prayer that his soul makes, a multitude of sacred desires in your behalf. It will be his first exercise on awakening in the morning, the last on retiring at night, and the chief one during the Holy Mass. Blessed be Jesus and Mary! Amen."*

During the commencements of the work at Lyons Mother de Chantal continued to receive from her director many letters, full of encouraging words, advice on matters spiritual and temporal, news of the convent at Annecy, and sometimes little unaffected sketches of himself. One of these deserves quotation as exemplifying the Bishop's love of nature, the poetical, childlike vividness of his imagination, and his constant habit of drawing lessons from everything that came before his eyes. It was written on the first Thursday of Lent, 1615. "Yesterday, on Ash Wednesday, I passed my morning alone in the Gallery and in the chapel (at Sales). It had snowed heavily, and the courtyard was covered to the depth of more than a foot. John made his way to the middle of it, swept bare a place in the midst of the snow, and cast thereon some corn for the pigeons, who came together in this refectory to take their meal with admir-

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MXL, p. 297.

able calm and decorum : and I amused myself with watching them. You cannot imagine the edification which these little creatures afforded me, for they never said a single tiny word, and those who finished their meal first flew away to a spot close by, there to await the others. When these had emptied half the place, a number of little birds, who had been watching them, came and settled around : and all the pigeons who were still eating withdrew to one side of the clearing, to leave the greater part of the space clear for the smaller birds, who also sat themselves down to table and ate, without any interference from the pigeons.

" I admired this charity ; for the poor pigeons were so afraid of disturbing the little birds to whom they were giving alms, that they kept themselves in a group at one end of the table. And I admired the discretion of the tiny mendicants, who only came for alms when they saw that the pigeons had nearly finished and that there was still enough left for others. Indeed it moved me even to tears, to see the charitable simplicity of the doves, and the trust of the little birds in their charity. I do not know that a preacher could have touched me so deeply. This picture of virtue did me much good all during the day."*

In the same letter the Saint also gives a little glimpse of his spiritual life at this time. " God favours me," he writes, " with many consolations and holy affections by means of the illuminations and perceptions (*sentiments*) which he pours forth in the higher part of my soul ; the lower part has no share in this. May he be blessed for ever. May God, who is the soul of our heart, my very dear mother, deign to fill us always with his holy love. Amen."

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre ML, p. 314.

CHAPTER III*

Rules given by Francis to the Visitation—Rapid progress of the Institute

THE Bishop of Geneva did not allow Mother de Chantal to stay at Lyons longer than nine months. He then appointed Mother Favre superioress of the new house and recalled Mother de Chantal to Annecy. His reason for this was that her presence at the "First Monastery" was necessary for the guidance and formation of the sisters at Annecy, inasmuch as for this particular work no one was so excellently gifted as she was. He also wished to discuss with her the rules that were to be given to the institution, and to decide with her help what was to be its final and definite character. This discussion was made all the more necessary because the Archbishop of Lyons held views as to the future of the society different in essential matters from those of the Founder. The Bishop of Belley relates this fact with a characteristically acid touch. "The Archbishop," he writes, "who afterwards became Cardinal de Marquemont—a person of great virtue, but one who, having passed the greater part of his life at the Court of Rome, where he had been Auditor of the Rota, had in his mind all the Italian maxims about the government of women—disliked the idea of the nuns living without (solemn) vows or enclosure: he not only advised our Saint, but strongly urged him, as the Apostle says, *in season and out of season*, so to arrange that his daughters should choose some one of the cloistered rules approved by the Church, and that they should become in the full sense of the word nuns, should make solemn profession of vows, and should observe perpetual enclosure."† Mgr. de Marquemont's own words are as follows: "At the present moment no greater fervour could be desired. But human weakness and inconstancy are such that one cannot hope for a lasting perseverance where nature suffers and is ill at ease; that there is every reason to fear lest the freedom to go out should introduce dissipation of mind and relaxation, perhaps even license and disorder; and that simple vows are bonds not sufficiently strong to stop nature's inclination towards change." According to the Bishop of Belley, no less an authority than Blessed Robert Bellarmine was opposed to the new proposals. The letter, quoted by Camus, is interesting. In answer to a letter from Francis de Sales the great Jesuit wrote as follows: "I will give you the advice which I would act upon myself, if I were concerned with

* Hamon, l. v, chap. 3. † *Esprit*, Part XV, Section 9.

a like matter. I would, then, keep these young people and widows in the state in which they are now and would not change that which is doing well. For before the time of Boniface VIII there were nuns in the Church, both the eastern and the western, . . . but these were not so shut up in their convents that they did not go out when it was necessary. And Your Very Reverend Lordship is not unaware that simple vows oblige no less, and are of no less merit before God, than solemn vows; for the solemn vows, as well as the enclosure, began with the ecclesiastical decree of the same Boniface VIII. To-day, moreover, the convent of noble ladies, founded by St Frances, flourishes greatly in Rome, for whom nevertheless there is neither enclosure nor solemn profession. Consequently, if in your country these maidens and widows live so holily, without being enclosed and cloistered, and are able at the same time to be of use to the laity, I do not see why this manner of life should be changed."*

As to Francis himself, with his keen understanding of the new needs of the Church, he desired that his daughters should not be completely subject to enclosure, in order that under well-defined conditions they might be able to go out and visit the sick, console the afflicted, and aid the poor. He desired indeed that the spiritual and contemplative life should come first, but he did not intend that the active and external work of charity should be altogether excluded. In the words which the Bishop of Belley puts into Francis's mouth, when discussing this matter, it would appear that the biographer gives too much stress to the works of charity, such as is not consonant with other well-known utterances and writings of the Saint. According to Jean Pierre Camus, the Bishop said: "I in no way thought of founding an institute under solemn vows, being of opinion that there were already an astonishing number of these, but only to form a little association of maidens and widows, without vow or enclosure, who would have no other good but that of holy charity. . . . Their occupation indoors would have been prayer and work, and outside they would have visited the sick deprived of all other help: which is what they have done up to the present with so much success and devotion, that our little town is much edified thereby; and I fear there will be considerable comment when, on account of vows and enclosure, they will be forced to give up this exercise of mercy, for which I had given them the name of the Visitation of St Mary, in order that they might have as example of their visits to the sick that which the Blessed Virgin paid to St Elizabeth, when she stayed three months to assist and serve her. Now that they are to be enclosed, they will be more visited than

* This letter is given in the Appendix of Tom. XVII, E. N., p. 418.

visiting: but since the Providence of God so ordains, may his holy will be done for ever."*

These extracts have been given because of their interest. The Abbé Hamon sums up the matter thus: "Francis . . . had always shown himself favourable to the visiting of the poor. He had meant his daughters to imitate the example of the ladies of the *Torre de Specchi*, founded a short time previously by St Frances of Rome. In fact, on May 6, 1610, he wrote: 'At the approaching feast of Pentecost there will be initiated a congregation of ladies of great virtue and quality. . . . They will give themselves greatly to works of charity towards the poor and sick, to whose service these saintly souls desire in part to consecrate themselves.' That is why he thought at the very beginning of naming them the *Daughters of St Martha;* and it was for the same reason that he wished to dedicate his congregation to Blessed Amadeus of Savoy, the friend of the poor. Nevertheless, if all the texts left us by the holy Founder are carefully considered, there can be no mistake about his principal intention: in his eyes this visiting of the poor and sick was only a secondary work. His first intention had always been, above everything else, to give to God daughters of prayer, spiritual souls (*des âmes intérieures*) completely given up to the perfection of divine love, desirous of uniting themselves generously in all things to the will of God, to his least desires and intentions. In order to favour this life, hidden '*in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall*, without being seen or heard in the world.'† From the very beginning Francis had fixed the chant of the Office, and established grills in the parlour: he had also permitted the taking of perpetual, though simple, vows. And so the Bishop of Geneva did not persist obstinately in his first views: inspired only by his desire for the best, he carefully weighed the reasons for and against: and, preferring to his own opinion that of the Archbishop of Lyons, he decided that his congregation should become a religious order in the strict sense, should observe an absolute enclosure and should take solemn vows."

Even though there may be those who wish that he had followed his first design, according to the advice of the great Bellarmine, yet at least it must be confessed that the humility of his surrender to the views of the Archbishop of Lyons is a wonderful example of a great fundamental virtue. Perhaps, if he had not made the change, his Order might never have been the source whence sprung the great devotion to the Sacred Heart, which has revived in these later centuries the love of the God made man. For it is not wrong, I think, to say that only in the heart of a contemplative religious could

* *Esprit*, Part XV, Section 11.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MXCIV, p. 16.

such a devotion have been born. St Vincent de Paul might surely have a heavenly envy of St Margaret Mary.

The foundation at Lyons was soon followed by another. The magistrates of Moulins, attracted by what they heard of the new religious, asked urgently that a house of the Order might be established in their town; and the Archbishop of Lyons, as administrator of the diocese to which Moulins was then attached, gave strong support to their request. As a matter of fact, neither Francis de Sales nor Mme. de Chantal was very anxious to initiate a new foundation at this moment, because they did not consider that the numbers and resources of the Order were sufficient for a third house. Their hands, however, were forced in the matter by the restless energy and determination of a certain Mme. des Gouffiers, who was the real originator of the enterprise. Eventually, therefore, they consented, and despatched Mother de Bréchard and four companions to Moulins, having received assurances that everything was prepared for the reception of the sisters. This was on July 24, 1616. After a very difficult and unpleasant journey the little company arrived at their destination. It at once became evident that Mme. des Gouffiers' assurances and promises went considerably beyond the actual facts, and the sisters found practically nothing of all that had been guaranteed. Indeed for some time they were in need of even the merest necessities of life. Far from being discouraged, however, the little community placed full confidence in the divine Providence and overcame all difficulties by patience and self-denial. Such was the edification given by the sanctity of their lives and by their humble courage in the face of trouble, that in a short time no less than twenty postulants applied for admission, and generous benefactors came forward to supply all that was needed.

In the meanwhile Francis de Sales had been doing everything that was possible under the circumstances to assist Mother de Bréchard in her task, and afforded her and her companions the greatest help by his letters of advice and encouragement. Besides the troubles already mentioned—the need of everything and the rather overbearing procedures of Mme. des Gouffiers—Mother de Bréchard was still further handicapped by illness. On September 19, 1616, the Bishop wrote to her as follows: "I have received no letter from you, my very dear daughter, since your departure. I beg you to tell me the reason: for I know well, in spite of this, that your charity is unvarying.

'But I have learned from letters, coming from Lyons, that you are sick and also somewhat taken aback at not having found things in such good shape as our desires had made us imagine. Herein, my dear daughter, are the true signs of the excellence of your task: the approach thereto is always difficult, progress a little less so, and

the end successful. Do not lose courage, for God will never abandon the care of your heart and of your little flock, so long as you confide in him. The path towards consolation is difficult: but that which follows is our reward. Give no place to disappointment, my dear daughter, nor let your spirit weaken in the midst of contradictions. Has the service of God ever been exempt from such, especially in its birth?

'But I must tell you quite simply what it is that I fear above everything in this business: it is a temptation to aversions and repugnances between you and our N.,* for this is the temptation that comes ordinarily during the course of work depending on the co-operation of two people. It is the temptation of the world's angels, since it arose between the greatest saints, and it is our foolishness—the foolishness of all of us children of Adam—which ruins us, unless charity rescues us therefrom. When I see two Apostles separating because they could not agree about the choice of a third companion, I find these little aversions quite bearable, provided that they spoil nothing, just as the separation I speak of in no way hindered the apostolic mission. If something similar were to happen between you two, who are women, it would not be astonishing, provided that it did not last. But nevertheless, my dear daughter, lift up your spirit, and realize the great importance of your conduct. Endure, do not get vexed, smooth everything over, consider that it is the work of God to which this lady devotes herself according to her lights, and you according to yours, and that each of you must bear and forbear with regard to the other for the love of our Saviour. Two or three years pass soon, and eternity endures.

'The ill-health of your body is an additional burden, but the promise of assistance to those who are afflicted must strengthen you greatly. In fine, beware of discouragement. Believe me, we must sow with labour, perplexity, and anguish, in order to harvest with joy, consolation, and happiness; and holy confidence in God gentles all things, obtains all things, establishes all things.

'I am completely yours, my dearest daughter, and I never cease praying God that he will make you holy, strong, constant, and perfect in his service. Very cordially I greet our dear sisters, and I beg them to pray God for my soul, inseparable from yours and theirs in the love which is according to Jesus, our Saviour.

'FRANCIS,
'*Bp. of Geneva.*'"

Encouraged by the success and fruitfulness of the Order, Francis de Sales now turned his attention to the task of giving it definite constitutions. As a preparation for this difficult task, he spent a

* Probably Mme. des Gouffiers.

long time in imploring the divine assistance; he studied the rules of various Orders and congregations, drawing from these constitutions, whatever was suitable for his purpose; and finally consulted those ecclesiastics upon whose experience and wisdom he could place reliance. The constitutions which he then drew up are given very fully by Charles Auguste de Sales, and of these we give quotations, omitting certain details and rules such as by reason of their minuteness and intimacy are not suitable for the scope of this book.* Some of these regulations are now common to many religious institutes, but it must be remembered that at this time they were, in a sense, innovations, the wisdom of which has been recognized by later founders and has been accorded the sincere flattery of imitation. The Bishop first of all reveals the exact object of the new Order in his enumeration of those who would be suitable candidates.

"There are a number of women who, under the inspiration of God, often aspire to the religious life. These, however, because of weak health or advanced years, or because they feel it impossible for them to observe the ordinary austerities of the religious life, are unable to enter convents in which exterior penance is rigorously observed, and for this reason are obliged to remain amidst the distractions of the world, exposed to continual occasions of sin or, at least, to the risk of falling away from the fervour of devotion. This congregation has therefore been founded in order that these souls may henceforward devote themselves to perfection in the divine love, and that the feeble and the weak may not be hindered by too austere a rule from this pursuit.

"For this reason it will be open to receive therein, not only unmarried maidens, but also widows, provided that these are lawfully freed from the responsible care of their children and have made suitable arrangements with regard to their family affairs.

"Secondly, those may be received who, on account of physical weakness or age, cannot enter other convents, provided that they are endowed with a healthy and well-ordered mind, and are prepared to live in profound humility, obedience, simplicity, gentleness, and abdication of self. Exception must be made, however, of those who suffer from some contagious disease such as leprosy and the like, and to those who are so worn out by serious infirmities as to be incapable of carrying out the rule and exercises of the congregation.

"Thirdly, those also will be received who are strong and healthy in constitution, as being called by God to the health and comfort of the weak; and just as the weak will profit by the health of the strong, so in like manner the strong will profit by the merits derived from the patience of the weak. Moreover, in order that both may have access to the congregation, the Mother Superior will be care-

* See C. A. de S., l. viii, p. 133, vol. ii.

fully on her guard that there shall not be introduced, either directly or indirectly, any other corporal austerity but those already established, lest such should become of obligation or custom. . . .

"The sisters of the congregation shall be of three ranks or orders: the first, choir-sisters, destined for the recitation of the Office; the second, associates, that is to say, those who, not being able to recite or chant the Office, are nevertheless admitted to all the other exercises of the congregation and of the religious life; and the third, the lay-sisters. . . .

"The number of sisters may not be more than thirty-three, twenty choir-sisters at least, nine associates, and four lay-sisters; unless for a valid reason it be otherwise advised by the spiritual father, the Mother Superior, the Chapter, and the Right Reverend Bishop. . . .

"Enclosure will be strictly observed according to the statutes of the Council of Trent. . . .

"All the sisters were to be obedient to the Mother Superior, and, in case of disobedience, were to be punished; they would neither fast nor undertake any austerity without her permission; they were to consult her with confidence and follow her advice. She would dispense them from the observation of small matters, but was to reserve more important dispensations for the judgement of the spiritual superior and the bishop. The Mother Superior should rule with gentleness, making requests of the sisters rather than giving them commands; . . . when the period of her office was ended, she was once more to take up, as in the lowest rank, the practice of obedience and humility.

"The virtue of poverty," wrote the Bishop, "will be strictly observed in such a way that all things are held in common, and that not one of the sisters shall possess a single thing of her own, even of such things as are in ordinary usage; and therefore neither rooms, nor beds, nor clothes, nor linen, nor medals, nor crucifixes, nor rosaries, nor books, nor any similar things, shall be personal property, but shall be changed at the end of the year, at the time when the saints' names are allotted." He then makes an exception in favour of any sick nun who shall keep whatever room the doctor thinks best for her, and in favour of the Mother Superior, who was to retain the room most suitable for the purposes of her office.

For the furnishing of the convent, table-ware, and such-like, everything was to be of the simplest, and silver plate was to be forbidden; but for the service of the sanctuary and altar the sisters might employ "the most precious things in the world, to the greatest glory of God."

The usual order of the day was as follows:

"Five o'clock was the hour for rising, which was followed by an

hour's prayer and meditation, ending with the chanting of Prime.

At a quarter to 7 each sister would go to her work, either in her cell or in the particular sphere assigned to her.

At 8, Terce, Sext, Holy Mass, None, and the morning examination of conscience. Then work in silence.

At 10, dinner, followed by recreation.

At 12, work in silence.

At 2, reading in private, which each sister could do either in the choir, in the garden, or in her cell, according as she liked.

At 3, Vespers ; after which the community would gather together, and one of the sisters would give an account of her reading while the others worked : this was to be done in turns.

At 5, Compline and meditation till a quarter to 6, when all would be free for fifteen minutes.

At 6, supper, followed by recreation.

At 8, reading in common or spiritual conference ; the great silence ; Matins, followed by the evening examination of conscience. Finally the reading of the points for the next day's meditation.

Then all retired to their cells for the night."*

Following the usual monastic practice, meals were to be accompanied by the reading aloud of some instructive book such as the life of a saint or sacred history. Outside the time of recreation silence was to be everywhere observed, and when conversation was allowed, it was to be such as became religious women, especial stress being laid on the necessity for observing the rules of charity and consideration for others. The next regulation is interesting as an index of what sometimes happened in those days, for the Saint was probably guarding against a small abuse which he had seen with his own eyes in certain houses, the discipline of which had become relaxed in minor matters. The keeping of animals, as pets, was forbidden : "no useless animals," says the Founder, "such as little dogs, squirrels, and the like." Rules were also given for interviews in the parlour, which would be supplied with a grill, and these rules again were the stricter on account of the abuses which the Bishop had observed in certain of the older convents of those days.

With regard to fasting, in addition to the days prescribed by the Church, the sisters were to fast on all the Fridays from Michaelmas to Easter, and on the eves of Trinity Sunday, the Ascension, Corpus Christi, St. Augustine's day, and before all the feasts of Our Lady.

The sisters were to wear a black habit and veil, details of which were given.

Besides the ordinary confessions, the sisters were to receive the help of an extraordinary confessor four times a year. Each day

* See *La Vie Contemplative* (Parkminster Press), p. 131

three of the sisters would receive the Blessed Sacrament, which was to be done in rotation : Thursdays, Sundays, and special feasts were assigned as days of general communion. This rule, like other ordinances, has been altered by later legislation. The Blessed Sacrament was to be taken once a week to those of the sisters who might be ill.

Once a month each of the sisters was to consult the Mother Superior for the purpose of obtaining spiritual direction ; at each first Communion of the month they would renew their profession, and at similar intervals of time the constitutions were to be read. Chapter was to be held every Saturday.

In these early days it was decided that the Office to be recited every day should be the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Saint's exposition of his reasons for this decision is sufficiently interesting and characteristic to be quoted almost in full : it is found in his petition to the Holy Father.

" Inasmuch as women for the most part are unlearned in Latin, and this especially in parts of France, it does not much matter, as regards their spiritual edification and consolation whether they recite this or that office, provided that they recite it properly and devoutly. Now for this reason it is most important that they should recite always the same office ; for they pronounce more clearly, distinctly, and surely what they are accustomed to recite so often, and do not devote all their attention to correct reading and pronunciation, as they would be forced to do, should they each day have to read new and unaccustomed matter. This is particularly the case in parts of France, where they have a pronunciation of Latin which is not only very bad and unbecoming, but altogether ridiculous ; so that those who often hear the Divine Office in other monasteries cannot help but laugh, unless indeed they blush with shame. That is why, when the sisters recite every day the same Office, they do so more easily and exactly, and with the chant are enabled to lift up their devotion and inward attention to God."* He further points out that by this means many would be enabled to recite the one simple Office who would be hindered by the continual changes and complications of the greater Office, as sung or recited by the Church.

Finally, the Saint decided that the ultimate superiors of the Visitation convents should be the bishops of the diocese in which the houses were situated. " By this arrangement it will happen," says Charles Auguste de Sales, " that the Order will not fall away altogether from a regular observance of its constitutions, all the more so that if one bishop is wanting perhaps in diligence, another will succeed him who will restore everything with vigour ; and, if

* C. A. de S., l. viii, p. 141, vol. ii.

matters are not satisfactory in one diocese, they will be better conditioned in another."*

"Such," says M. Hamon, "is the substance of the Visitation rule. Therein are found no corporal austerities, such as are likely to scare the weakness of human nature; and nevertheless in these rules nature finds its death-sentence in the continual sacrifice of the will and the obligation of continual occupation, in the absolute renunciation of self and the constant uniformity of daily exercises, which break the natural inconstancy of the human heart. But that which gives these rules their greatest merit is the spirit of charity and gentleness, humility and simplicity, candour and innocence, in which their author desires them to be observed. He wishes that everything should be done for love and not from compulsion; that all the sisters should have but one heart and one soul, like the sisters of one family; that their piety should be both attractive and solid, severe for self, but lovable and indulgent for others; that being ever ready to sacrifice their desires and dislikes for the sake of charity, the sisters should strive in all things to please their neighbours; that gentleness should characterize the whole of their bearing, and that their speech, voice, appearance, and manners should be but the expression of the gentle affection which permeated their hearts. . . .

"'The sisters of the Visitation,' their Founder would say, 'are all of them called to very great perfection, and their enterprise is the highest and loftiest that can be imagined, all the more so because they not only claim to unite themselves with the will of God as all creatures must do, but in addition they aspire to conform themselves to his desires and even to his intentions, let me remark, almost before these have been expressed; and if they can bethink themselves of anything more perfect and of a degree of greater perfection than to unite themselves to the will of God and to his intentions, they would doubtless undertake to lift themselves to this height because their vocation obliges them to do so.'

"In order that his daughters might not be turned away from this main objective, the Founder often reinsists in his letters on the necessity of not placing upon their shoulders external tasks such as might prove too great a distraction from their first vocation, as for example by directing their energies to the education of girls.

"Faithful to the instructions of its saintly Founder the Order of the Visitation has always persevered in perfect regularity, and has never failed to be an example in the Church of admirable virtue.

"As a matter of fact there is little reason for surprise in this continual fervour of the Visitation sisters when we remember that their Founder put them in the best school of perfection by con-

* C. A. de S., l. viii, p. 144, vol. ii. Cf. also *Esprit*, X^e^p., Section 8.

stantly recommending them to seek inspiration from the lessons of the Heart of Jesus and by giving them their home, so to speak, in that adorable Heart. Such indeed is the final and innermost intention of the Saint: he wishes that his daughters should be the disciples of the divine Heart, and he seems to have had a prophetic glimpse of their definite mission in the Church, after our Lord's revelations to the Blessed Margaret Mary.* His words are too clear and remarkable not to be quoted here.

"On the very eve of the new congregation's institution he wrote to Baroness de Chantal in a letter dated probably May 28, 1610:

"'My daughter, I must tell you that I never saw so clearly as I do now how much you are my daughter: I see it indeed in the Heart of our Lord. . . . O my daughter, how intensely do I desire that we be one day altogether dead to ourselves in order to live completely for God. O when shall it be that we shall *live now, not we, but Christ shall live in us?* I am going off shortly to offer up prayer about this, when I will pray the royal Heart of our Saviour for our hearts. . . .'†

"A year after, on June 10, 1611, he wrote to his saintly fellow-worker: 'Truly our little congregation is a work of the hearts of Jesus and Mary. The dying Saviour brought us forth through the wound in his Sacred Heart.'‡

"Later on, in his Conferences, he studies the kind of prayer suitable for the Visitation: this was the prayer of simple contemplation or look, of simple surrender to God and repose in him. But immediately he adds that this look must be towards the Sacred Heart, this repose, this quietude, this gentle sleep be *upon this beloved Heart.* Here is the valuable testimony of St Jane Frances de Chantal:

"'Our blessed father, who had a high understanding of all kinds of prayer, as is evident in his writings, always approved of this particular prayer, and used to say moreover that, whereas others might partake of different foods at our Lord's table, we were to rest our souls and all our affections in a quite simple confidence upon his loving breast.'

"In 1620 he writes to a sister at Moulins: 'Are we not adoring servants and children of our Saviour's loving and paternal heart? Have we not built our hopes upon this foundation? He is our master, our king, our father, our all. Let us take thought to serve him well: and he will devise for us his choicest favours.'§

* Canonized since these words were written.

† E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DCI, p. 313. I quote from the E. N., not from Hamon.

‡ E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCXCIII, p. 63.

§ I was unable to find this letter: no reference is given by Hamon.

" All these views of the Founder with regard to his congregation were so well known that as early as 1657 Mgr. de Maupas, when condensing the memoirs of the first sisters, wrote with assurance the following remarkable words, which to-day seem to us prophetic: 'These faithful lovers of our Saviour set themselves to the exact practice of the rules and holy constitutions, drawn up for them by their charitable lawgiver. These constitutions were in such conformity with the maxims and spirit of the Gospel that, according to the testimony of several great servants of God, they are the marrow, the sap, the epitome thereof. So true is this that those religious who succeed in observing them faithfully can truly be called the daughters of the Gospel, established in this century to be the imitators of the two virtues dearest to the Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word—meekness and humility, which are the basis and foundation of their Order and give them the incomparable privilege and grace of bearing the name of daughters of the Heart of Jesus.' "*

As soon as Francis had drawn up the constitutions of his congregation, he sent them to Rome for the approval of the Holy See, and petitioned that the Visitation might receive the status of a religious order. As we have seen earlier on, he had already written to Cardinal Bellarmine, who had promised to forward the undertaking, even though he considered it to be a matter of some difficulty and had himself been opposed to the idea of strict enclosure. The Bishop now wrote a new letter of recommendation, this time to Don Juste Guérin, a Barnabite father, asking his assistance, but at the same time suggesting that the good father should proceed with caution and tact. 'For,' wrote Francis de Sales, 'certain austere and rigid ecclesiastics have shown signs of dissatisfaction that in this congregation there is so little austerity and rigour: but it is necessary to keep in view the object of our undertaking, which is to be able to receive maidens of delicate health and women of advanced age.'†

Nevertheless, in spite of the Bishop's fears, the desired authority was at length received from Rome. This was a Bull of Pope Paul V, dated April 23, 1618, authorising Francis to establish the institution of the Visitation as a religious Order under the rule of S. Augustine.‡ Consequently, on October 16 of the same year the Bishop carried out the mandate of the Holy See, at the same time adding certain regulations for the government of each house which it is not necessary to detail here. As to the Office, he had received authority to allow the sisters to recite the Little Office of Our Lady. It is evident, however, that on the principal feasts the sisters adopted the plan of harmonizing this Office with the spirit of the day by

* Hamon, vol. ii, p. 91 *et seq.*

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCLXXXVI, p. 142.

‡ E. N., Tom. XVIII, p. 423.

making certain slight changes. We have witness of this in a letter written by Francis to Mother de Chantal three years later on August 21, 1621. "As to the Office," he says, "I hear that people have been complaining because our sisters have been reciting the psalms of the Lady Office along with the chapter, verses and prayer of the day. How very hypercritical some people are! The fathers of the Oratory do a great deal more: and in Italy several bishops have composed complete offices for the saints of their churches. But it cannot be helped: everyone must be allowed to talk as he lists. And so, in order to smooth over everything as far as is possible, we must say the Office of Our Lady in its entirety, and at the end add a commemoration of the day. Against this nothing can be said.

"We have obtained leave from Rome for the continuation of the Little Office for yet another ten years after the completion of the seven already granted. My agent says that it is not right to have recourse to Rome for things that can be arranged without such recourse, and some of the cardinals have said the same thing: for, say they, there are things that have no need of authorization because they are permissible in themselves, which things, when authority is asked for them, are examined under diverse other aspects; and the Pope is quite content that custom should authorize a number of things which he does not wish to authorize himself, because of the consequences."*

As to the spirit in which these constitutions were to be observed, this is given in one of the Conferences (*Entretiens*), and St Jane Frances describes it as the epitome of all the perfection of the Order. One of the nuns, Sister Simplicienne, had put the following question to the Founder: "My Lord, if you were a religious amongst us, what would you do in order to become really perfect?"—"My dear daughter," he answered, with a gentle smile, "you ask me what I would do? I would not do as well as you do, I am sure, for I am no good at all: but it seems to me that with God's grace I would keep my attention so fixed on the small and minute observances practised in this house that by this means I would strive to gain the heart of God. I would duly observe the rule of silence: and sometimes also I would speak, even during the time of silence, when charity should demand it, but never otherwise. I would speak in very gentle wise and would pay particular attention to this, because the constitutions order it. I would open and shut doors very gently, because our Mother desires it, and we are anxious to do all that she wishes should be done. I would keep my eyes lowered, and would bear myself in all modesty: for God and his angels ever watch us and love intensely those who do well. If I was appointed to some task or was given some particular charge, I would have a great love

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCXXI, p. 135.

for that duty and would strive to do everything properly. If I was given no particular work, I would concern myself with nothing other than to be very obedient and to have a great love for our Lord. Truly, it seems to me that I would love him well with all my heart, this good God of ours, and would devote to this purpose the whole of my mind in unison with the strict observance of the rules and constitutions. My dear daughter Simplicienne, we must do everything as well as we can, for we have only become religious for that reason: but we must not be astonished at our faults, for what can we do without the help of God? Indeed, nothing at all. Will you let me say yet another thing, my dear child? It is in my thought that I would be very cheerful and that I would never be hurried and over-eager; this, thanks be to God, I can manage already, for I never do hurry, but I would do it even less. I would keep myself very lowly and very small, I would humble myself, and would exercise myself in this matter according to circumstances: and if I met no occasions for humility, I would at least humble myself at not being humbled. I would try as best I could to keep myself in the presence of God and to perform all my actions for the love of him; for what have we to do in this world other than that? I would strive to give up my own will entirely, and hope that I would let others do to me whatever they willed, and I would often read the chapters on humility and modesty. May God give us his grace in all this, and may he be ever blest."*

These admonitions form, as it were, the groundwork of the counsels of perfection given about this time by the Bishop to Mother de Chantal herself. "I desire," he wrote, "that you should be very lowly and humble in your own eyes, ever gentle and sympathetic. Willingly take advantage of every opportunity to humble yourself. Do not be quick to speak, but answer slowly, humbly, gently, and say much by keeping silence out of modesty and self-command. Be keen to excuse and suffer your neighbour with great meekness of heart. Do not linger over the thought of the contradictions which you encounter; do not look at them, but rather look at God in all things and submit in all simplicity to his commands. Do all things for God, uniting yourself to him or continuing your union by simply fixing the eyes of your soul upon him or directing towards him the outpouring of your heart. Never be hurried in anything. Do all things calmly and in a spirit of repose: for aught that may happen, do not lose your inward peace, even if everything seems to be going wrong; for what is anything in life compared to peace of soul? Recommend everything to God and keep yourself quiet and restful in the bosom of his fatherly providence. When you find your mind elsewhere, bring it back thither gently and very simply, without

* *Entretiens*, Appendice, p. 397.

ever throwing yourself into any cares, desires, affections, or expectations whatsoever, no matter what the pretext be.* Our Saviour loves you, he wishes you to be utterly his. Seek no other arms to bear you up but his, no other breast on which to find repose but his and his divine providence: do not cast your eyes elsewhere nor elsewhere fix your mind but upon him. Keep your will so intimately united to his that nothing can come between them, and forget all the rest. Keep up your courage and remain humbly prostrate before the divine majesty. Desire nothing but the pure love of Our Saviour, refuse nothing, however difficult it may be, putting on Jesus crucified and loving him in his sufferings."

It was soon evident that the blessing of God rested upon an institution so strongly stamped with the seal of Christ's gospel. During the few years that remained to the Bishop he saw the erection of thirteen convents, and Mme. de Chantal herself founded no fewer than eighty-seven. It is impossible in such a development not to recognize the hand of Providence, a fact which is made still clearer by the quality of the vocations which played a part in the early history of the congregation. For it could be truly said of those first days that God supplied it with almost as many souls fitted to govern houses as he granted it ordinary vocations. Nor was the success which attended the various foundations less remarkable. It was this confidence that God's guiding hand was with them which characterized the policy of the two founders both in the establishment of new houses and the acceptance of candidates for the Order. When they were given some sign of the divine will, they followed out its indication with zeal and love: but they never forestalled it under the impulse of a natural desire for success. "Slowly and surely," the Bishop used to say; "let us be patient and we shall accomplish quite enough, if the little that we do is in harmony with the will of our Master. It is better that our sisters should gain growth through the roots of virtue than through the branches of houses. They will be none the more perfect for having a great number of convents. *Thou hast multiplied the nation and hast not increased the joy, says Isaias.*"†

As regards the choice of candidates for the Order, the Saint paid little attention to the size of their fortune or the strength of their health, but insisted rather that they should have the virtues of humility and meekness. In a letter to Mother de Blonay, he says: "I infinitely prefer the meek and humble, even though they be poor, to those who are less humble and less meek, even though they be rich. It is all very well to say: *Blessed are the poor;* yet human

* "Sans vous jeter jamais dans aucuns soins, desirs, affections ni pretentions quelconques. . . ."

† *Esprit*, Part VIII^e^, Section 21.

wisdom will never cease saying: 'Blessed are convents, chapters, and houses that are rich.' Even in this matter we must cultivate the poverty that we so prize, while enduring with patience that it is held in such small esteem."* One day there was a discussion in his presence as to the dowry of a young lady who was about to be professed. Mme. de Chantal was insisting that the dowry should be a full one: he, on his part, said not a word either for or against; but, on returning home, he reproved the firmness of the Mother Superior in a note which ended thus: "Mother, your sense of justice is greater than your generosity: in these matters it is better to be generous than just."†

On another occasion he taught the same lesson. The superiors had accepted as a subject for profession a lady who was an only daughter and an heiress to considerable wealth. When Francis asked her how she wished to dispose of her property prior to her profession, she replied that she wished to give it to the convent. This the Bishop refused. "We did not found our congregation," he said, "in order to do injury to families: it will be sufficient if you assign yourself a dowry somewhat richer than the ordinary, since you have the means to do so; that will be enough. Now, what are your intentions with regard to the rest?"—"I will give it to my brother."—"And why not to your mother?"—"Because she has given me very grave cause for dissatisfaction."—"That," answered Francis, "does not dispense you from observing God's commandment that you should honour your parents." And it was in this sense that the matter was settled.

In the same spirit that urged the Bishop to set little value on the material possessions of his candidates, he also insisted that aspirants should not be refused on account of physical defects or weak health. "I am the friend of the weak," he wrote in 1620, "and am always afraid lest the inconveniences caused by them should arouse a spirit of prudence in our houses which would lead to their being sent away without consulting the spirit of charity under which our congregation has been founded."‡ And again, a year later: "I am glad that you love the lame, the deformed, the one-eyed, and even the blind, provided that they are right in their intentions; for they will be none the less fair and perfect in heaven. And if we persevere in our charity towards those who have such bodily imperfections, God will bring to us, in spite of human prudence, numbers of those who are well-favoured and agreeable even in the eyes of the world."§ Francis, in fact, had a special predilection for those who were

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMVI, p. 289.
† *Recueil de la Mère Greffier.*
‡ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCVI, p. 130.
§ E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCXXVI, p. 142.

deformed by nature in any way at all, and when he was asked the reason, replied: "Blessed are those who have nothing attractive about them, for the love which is shown to them is truly for God!" On one occasion there was presented to him a person who was completely deformed; he interrogated her in the usual way, recognized her great merit, and gave the following verdict: "Receive her; she is a beautiful soul hidden in a very ugly body—a brilliant diamond in a poor setting."

He taught the sisters that the true mark of vocation is a firm and constant will to serve God well in the state to which one feels called, accompanied by effort to attain perfection through the means suitable to that state. Moreover, where this good will was found, no account should be taken either of the occasion which gave rise to the vocation and which is often quite human, or of the repulsions, coldnesses, and spiritual fluctuations, which often ensue, and which are but the consequences of our natural weaknesses. If postulants cannot be received for trial without some guarantee as to their vocation, neither ought they to be given the habit and received into the noviciate, unless experience has demonstrated their willingness to improve themselves and to be submissive. Where there is a resolution to correct faults, these form no obstacle, because where there is less help from nature, there is given more help from grace. Above all, only those candidates should be admitted to profession in whom are found (i) a heart disposed to live in perfect obedience; (ii) a spirit willing to be guided by others and capable of understanding solid virtue; and (iii) serious efforts during the year's noviciate to effect a reformation, accompanied by some degree of progress and a firm resolution to persevere in the conquest of self.

Amongst those who sought admission into the new Order were found several whose names had already acquired a certain celebrity. Mother Angélique Arnauld, Abbess of Port Royal, did everything in her power to enter the Visitation; she made repeated applications both to the Bishop and to Mme. de Chantal for this purpose, yet always without success. Francis, with his wonderful insight into character, could never be persuaded to take upon himself the responsibility of such a step. He was, moreover, very averse to changes from one vocation to another, unless the will of God was very manifest in such cases: for he recognized that the desire for such a change often proceeded rather from a certain restlessness and discontent, inherent in human nature, than from a truly divine call.

It was quite otherwise with another vocation, that of Mlle. Lhuillier, whom he had met during one of his visits to Paris. This lady, richly endowed both by nature and fortune, had placed herself under the Saint's guidance, and he had in his heart formed the opinion that she was destined one day to become a religious. He

did not, however, say anything definite about this at first, because he saw that she was still greatly attracted by the world. All that he then did was to recommend that she should be faithful to certain devotional exercises given to her by him, and should dispose herself to follow out unhesitatingly whatever the will of God should decree in her regard. He told her, however, that when he returned to Annecy, he would write her a letter, in which he would communicate to her his final, considered judgement. Mlle. Lhuillier must have had some inkling in her mind as to what that judgement would be; for when, in due time, the letter arrived she found herself a prey to an extraordinary fear lest it should contain a summons to enter the religious life. Moved by this fear, yet anxious to do God's will, she refrained from opening the letter at once; she took the sealed packet with her to church, and offering it, as it were, to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, protested her readiness to follow out whatever the Bishop might advise.* The next day, after receiving Holy Communion, she opened the letter in great anxiety and nervousness; but the moment she had read the Saint's words, telling her to leave the world and enter the Order of the Visitation, she became conscious of a great change in her thoughts. Her trouble of mind was appeased, her repugnance to leave the world disappeared, and she experienced a strong inclination for the monastic life. In spite of the opposition of her relatives, she asked that day to enter the novitiate, and eventually became a fervent religious.

Francis, however, did not confine his energies to finding suitable candidates for the Order: having found them, he spent time and thought in training them thoroughly for the life that was before them. He himself, whenever he was at Annecy, heard their confessions every fortnight, and three times a week he would go to the convent in order that any of the sisters who wished to consult him might have the opportunity of doing so. He attached the greatest importance to the formation of the community at Annecy, because, inasmuch as it was necessarily the "Holy Source" of the Order, he wished it to become a real model for the other convents. Doubtless, also, he foresaw that from this house must be drawn the sisters who were to govern any houses which might be founded in the future.

It may be remarked here that, strictly speaking, the Order of the Visitation has no mother house, the wish of St Francis being that the only bond of union between any of his monasteries should be that of love. But the special claims of Annecy—the "Holy Source"—are made clear by these words of the Founder: "Although the monastery of Annecy is established in a small town, it has nevertheless been the will of divine Providence that the germ of the Congregation of the Visitation should be formed there, and have received

* This letter is given later in its proper chronological place.

in this place its law and foundations. And therefore the other monasteries of the Visitation are always ready to acknowledge it as their mother and source, and to maintain with it the closest union of charity, conforming themselves entirely to it, having particular intercourse with and recourse to it, in order to be instructed in the doubts and difficulties which may arise in practising the things of the Institute."

It may also be noticed that the Visitandines prefer to call their houses *monasteries*, a custom differing from the ordinary use of the English language, which, in common parlance, speaks of houses of men as monasteries and of houses of women as convents.

Mme. de Chantal, on her part, sought his advice in all things, but particularly when harassed by the ever-recurring perplexities of her charge. And all through his counsels runs that particular theme upon which we have found him insisting so often. She was to maintain, above everything, a constant spirit of calm and gentleness in the midst of all her worries, however harassing these might be. Thus, during one of the journeys to Burgundy, which she had been obliged to take in order to arrange important family affairs, he had written to her as follows: "Ah, I beg of you, my dear child, keep close to Jesus Christ, to our Lady, and to your good angel in the midst of all your affairs, so that you may not be worried by their multiplicity or amazed at their difficulty. Do one thing after the other, as well as you can, and concentrate your mind diligently upon each, yet always with gentleness and calm. If God brings matters to a successful issue, we will thank him therefor: if such is not his will, we will bless him all the same. It will be sufficient if you have striven in all sincerity for success, since neither our Lord nor reason itself demands of us the ultimate settling of results and events, but simply our loyal and honest effort, devotion, and diligence: for this much does depend on us, but not so success."*

That Mother de Chantal consulted the Bishop so frequently was an effect of her own humility rather than of any mistrust on his part in her judgement. In another letter he writes: "You can always answer for me without scruple, for the result will always be found the same as if I had answered myself. You are in mind and will and everything completely at one with me: you know what I am able to do, what I will, and what I desire. Do not refer anything back to me therefore: but answer boldly."†

Aided by the Bishop's confidence and counsel, Mother de Chantal continued to educate her novices and nuns. When some city invited her to found a new house within its walls, and it thus became necessary to separate some of the sisters from the First Monastery,

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCXII, p. 98.

† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLXV, p. 342.

she herself would accompany them to their new home, in order to help them by word and example in their difficult task. For it seems to have been a general rule that each new undertaking should be accompanied by hardships unforeseen, and should entail some novel and peculiar form of trouble. In April, 1618, a house was founded at Grenoble, where the Bishop was at the time preaching the Lenten Station. In October of the same year, Mme. de Chantal set out on a similar mission for Bourges, whither her brother, the Archbishop, had invited her. Here she laboured for six months in the midst of every kind of privation and difficulty. Although her brother had given orders that the sisters were to be supplied with all that was necessary, these orders were not carried out. So strong, however, was the Mother Superior's love of poverty and of suffering in her Master's service, that she never reported this state of affairs; but with patience and experienced skill made good all that was wanting, and before long was able to leave behind her a house distinguished by its regularity and fervent observance.

Her next call was to Paris, whither Francis had gone at the desire of the Duke of Savoy, and where he intended to found another house of the Order. Of resources for this undertaking he had none. "You will be surprised," he wrote to her, "that I should call you to this city in order to found therein a convent without our having any material resources. But do not be astonished. It will be neither you nor I who will effect this foundation; we should labour thereat in vain. But our Saviour it is who will accomplish the work; he will set his hand to it and will bless it with his grace."*

As a matter of fact innumerable difficulties were raised in the path of the new undertaking, not only by people hostile to religion, but also by those who, it might have been thought, would have been disposed to help it in every way. And sometimes the opposition would come from other convents.

Others there were who refused to welcome the new sisters, unless they were willing to change their rules or to undertake the management of houses for the fallen or of convents which were in need of reform. A certain religious, of considerable influence, came to Mme. de Chantal and informed her of this condition. "Very well, father," she replied gently, but firmly, "we will go back home rather than break the rules of our Institute. After all, we only desire to do the will of God. It is he who brought us here. If it pleases him that we should go back, we are ready to obey wholeheartedly either in one way or the other." The good father was very much struck by this answer and the manner in which it was given: thenceforward he declared himself on the side of Mme. de Chantal and repeated everywhere that the Spirit of God was with her.

* *Année*, May 1.

Others, again, complained that the Visitation, by means of its peculiar rule and spirit, would attract postulants who might have entered other Orders, and it would seem that Mother de Chantal's almost magnetic influence was part of the subject of complaint. "Would you believe," wrote the Bishop to that lady, "that certain servants of God told me to-day that the gentleness and piety of our Institute was so very much to the liking of the French mind, that you would deprive all the other nuns of their vogue; that when once anybody had seen that Mme. de Chantal, there was no room for anyone but her. Now, really, this is not so. God, who sees all things and who knows that we did not come to Paris in order to be seen of the public eye, but only to show to his goodness a few souls striving simply and solely for his glory—God, I say, will help us." As a matter of fact, on May 1, 1619, the Paris house was founded upon very small and lowly beginnings: indeed, so humble was it as greatly to distress a Mme. Amelot, who took great interest in the Visitation. "Madame," wrote Francis, "do not be astonished to see these daughters of our Lady so little accepted and so lowly. God will lift them up. He will give increase to this little Institute and it will multiply everywhere, to spread abroad, like the humble violet, the fragrance of its scent." In four months' time, as a matter of fact, the genuine sanctity of Mme. de Chantal and her sisters had attracted general admiration, and the kindness of friends enabled them to acquire a more suitable home.

The next year the convent of Lyons sent a colony to found a house at Mont Ferrand in Auvergne: and Francis, on his return to Annecy, despatched several sisters to Paris, these being destined to found an establishment at Orleans, whence the Order had received an invitation for the purpose. This was in July, 1620. A few days later the convent of Moulins sent a colony to Nevers. On February 8, 1624, a house was inaugurated at Valence; and a year afterwards Mother de Chantal herself went to Dijon in the month of May to found a convent in that town. And finally, on August 20, five sisters journeyed to the city of Belley, where Mgr. Camus wished to have a house of the new institution.

For the benefit of the sisters who were appointed to rule over these convents Francis composed a *rule of conduct* such as was of the greatest usefulness for those who were placed in command. His first principle was that a Mother Superior ought to possess in a high degree the virtues of humility and meekness, "those virtues which our Lord demanded of the Apostles, who were destined to be placed over the whole world. Keep yourselves profoundly humble of heart," he said, "by consideration of the fact that God chooses to make use of your littleness for so great a ministry as the guidance of others and the charge of souls. In order to fulfil this ministry,

be neither proud nor over-compliant with your sisters, but gentle, kind, and affable, having for them a warm, maternal, and 'pastoral' love, being everything to all, mother to all, helpful to all, the joy of all. Granted these conditions, everything will go well; without them, nothing will avail." His second principle was that a superioress ought to have a confidence in God greater even than her mistrust for herself. According to the Saint this confidence was to make them "humbly courageous through him who achieved the masterpiece of his omnipotence by the humiliation of his cross. The divine Master," he said, "by giving you this office, has bound himself to give you also the assistance of his hand. . . . If our Lord puts souls in your charge, in order that you may make them worthy of him, he will stretch forth his all-powerful arm as far as is needed for the work which he has assigned to you."

The Bishop then goes on to the details in the duties of a Mother Superior. "Be very careful," he says, "to maintain a holy calmness in your outward bearing, without ever appearing sad and gloomy, however troubled you may be, or on the other hand too little serious, for your expression should be grave yet gentle and humble. Your laughter should be moderate, your eyes ordinarily lowered, and you should never allow your affability to lessen your authority and respect. Follow the usual life of the community with simplicity in all things, without doing anything more or less than the ordinary. Everyone expects of you good example, but a good example accompanied by the gentleness of charity. . . ."

With regard to the government of the convent, it was the duty of the Mother Superior to be neither too strict nor too indulgent, to avoid all signs of mistrust, to be patient and kindly with everyone; she was to be strictly impartial, showing neither favouritism nor antipathy; she should bear in mind that, while she had charge of all, it was the weak rather than the strong who needed her special care, and it behoved her therefore to be ever very sympathetic towards those who were honestly struggling against imperfections, never giving expression to any signs of astonishment, whatever might be the weakness revealed; she was ever to have a firm intention of doing all things for the sake of God, and after that not to allow herself to be disconcerted when she found herself trammelled in her government of the house; she was to listen gently to any matter that was brought to her notice, put it before God in prayer, discuss it with her council, and then act for the best, confident that divine Providence would arrange the issue to his own greatest glory —and all this should be done with such gentleness and calm as to give no occasion to her inferiors to lose their respect for her nor to think themselves of great necessity in the government of the house.

"Hold fast," said the Founder, "to the strict observance of rule,

and to that propriety which should distinguish both your own persons and your convents. Teach your sisters that their one desire should be to love, praise, and serve God faithfully, and that he has brought them together in order that they be extraordinarily brave, dauntless, and constant in his service ; that they should give themselves up to the great and perfect virtues of a virile, strong, and generous devotion, to the abnegation of self-love, to the love of one's own lowliness, to the mortification of the senses, to a real and sincere love ; and that they should do what their Mother Superior commands them, neither more nor less, without any other ambition than that of serving God." He concludes this passage by saying that, however difficult the self-mortification demanded of the sisters might be, it could be made acceptable to them if their superior were to show under all circumstances an even cheerfulness and a sympathetic charity towards those under her charge.

Such then were the beginnings of the Visitation Order. We now pass on to the history of the Saint's doings from the year 1610 to the day of his death ; and we shall see in what follows that his care for the new institution was never allowed to interfere with his government of the diocese and the accomplishment of his public duties.

CHAPTER IV*
(1611–1613)

Political unrest—Conversion of Mme. de Saint Cergues—Lenten Station at Annecy—Visits Gex—Conversion of Baron de Monthelon—Joy of Francis at foundation of M. de Bérulle's Oratory—Gex again—Edits Roman Ritual for the diocese—Miraculous cure of the Saint himself—Lenten Station at Chambéry—Petitions the Pope to make Chambéry a separate diocese and to canonize Amadeus IX of Savoy—Controversy as to the Pope's power over Christian princes—Criticizes work by M. Milletot—His own opinion of the subject—Diocesan Synod—Letter about duelling—Another journey to Gex—Numerous conversions

AFTER the death of Henry IV the Duke of Savoy turned his attention once more to the retaking of Geneva, thinking to profit by the minority of Louis XIII. He knew by means of his spies that since the treaty of St Julian the Genevans had relaxed their vigilance, had allowed the fortifications of the city to deteriorate, and were not well provisioned for a siege. The Duke, in furtherance of his plan, brought into Savoy troops which had been raised for another purpose, and before long there was promise of renewed hostilities between the duchy and the Protestant republic. For some reason, however, Charles Emmanuel failed to act with that vigour and promptitude which in a matter of this kind is indispensable for success, and the Genevans, getting wind of his intentions, made speedy preparations for the defence of their city. Not content with this, they appealed to the Bernese and other Protestant states for support in face of the new danger. They even applied to Marie de Médicis, and the last hope of any success on the Duke's part for his new plan was destroyed by the opposition of the Queen, who feared that the taking of Geneva by Catholic forces would lead to a general insurrection of the Huguenots in France and a renewal of the disastrous religious wars.

Strange to relate, this state of hostilities in the political world was accompanied by a distinct movement towards the Catholic faith amongst some of the inhabitants of Geneva. Charles Auguste de Sales gives the names of a number of Calvinists who were reconciled to the Church by Francis de Sales during this period. The most notable of these was Mme. de Saint Cergues. "About the year

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 1.

1588 this lady had left her husband and had retired to Geneva, where she became famous for the ardour of her Calvinism. Owing to the fact that she devoted herself to preaching sermons to congregations of women, she was known by the name of the *Arch-Ministress.*"* According to the testimony of Charles Auguste de Sales, she enjoyed great credit and authority amongst the adherents of Geneva, and could challenge comparison with the most celebrated ministers in matters of controversy, to which she had devoted her studies for twenty-two years. Towards the end of the year 1610 she had come to Annecy to visit her relatives, some of whom were Catholics, and these latter invited her to call upon the Bishop. "No," she answered, "God forbid that I should go and see him. He is a sorcerer, who is held in detestation amongst our people by reason of his witchcraft." Her friends were moved to laughter at this ancient accusation against their beloved Bishop, but they continued to press her, and suggested finally that she might at least go and listen to one of his sermons. To this she consented, and, having heard him preach, was so far won over by his charm that she decided to revoke her first decision and pay him a call. The result was much the same as we have seen on other occasions. When, in the course of conversation, she gave vigorous expression to her prejudices against the Catholic faith, the Bishop listened patiently and without interruption; and then, ever maintaining his habitual calm and courtesy, set himself to answer her objections and to reveal to her the real beauty of the ancient worship, which was so continually misrepresented by its foes. The first interview led to others; little by little her defences broke down, her prejudices were removed, and the truth made its conquest over her mind. Eventually she submitted and decided to ask for admission into the Catholic Church. The ceremony of reconciliation took place in the convent of the Visitation. In making arrangements for this he wrote as follows to Mme. de Chantal: "Since I hope that the angels, and, above all, the Queen of angels, will look down upon this last phase of a soul's conquest, I desire that it should take place in the midst of your little flock, in order that we shall all be regarded with extraordinary joy and that together with these heavenly spirits, we shall have a feast of happiness over this prodigal child."†

This conversion created a sensation in Geneva and elicited a further outcry against the Bishop. Mme. de Saint Cergues, during her sojourn in the Calvinist capital, had resided in the house of Theodore de Beza, and now was made the recipient of a letter from that heresiarch's widow, a missive full of insults and coarse abuse. This document she took to Francis de Sales, who for her benefit

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCLX, note iii, p. 15.

† E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCLX, p. 16.

dictated a letter so trenchant and strong in its logic that her opponent found it convenient to make no reply.

During the following Lent the Bishop contented himself with preaching in the religious houses of Annecy and in the pro-cathedral. That the country was still in an agitated condition we see from a letter written in March to President Favre, on behalf of the inhabitants of Estrembières, who had written to Francis describing themselves as those of "his children who were most exposed to the persecution of their rebellious brethren."* The President at this time had a certain command over the troops of Savoy in his quality as a minister of state for the Duke. He had a difficult task, as the country was constantly traversed by Spanish and French soldiers in the Duke's employ, as well as by those of Savoy. During this month of March he had to complain to Charles Emmanuel of a certain Captain Gaucher and his men, who were beating the peasants, setting fire to the corn, and maiming cattle.†

During the month of May Francis went to the country of Gex, where he spent a fortnight in various negotiations and affairs, being accompanied by the Duke de Bellegarde. Here he reconciled the two churches of Divonne and Chalex, re-established the Catholic religion in these parts, and converted a Huguenot captain.

On his return to Annecy, the Bishop learnt that he had been accused at court of plots against Savoy on the occasion of this journey. He wrote to the Duke to justify himself, and succeeded in doing so. In a former letter he had asked permission to preach the next Lenten Stations in Paris, an invitation having been sent to him from that city for this object; the Duke, however, chose to refuse the request.‡

About this time, probably in the month of August, the Bishop had the consolation of effecting another notable conversion. Baron de Monthelon, a Huguenot nobleman, living in Lorraine, had happened to acquire a copy of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and was so moved by reading it that he was determined at all costs to speak to the author of such a wonderful work. In accordance with this resolve, he made his way to Annecy, and obtained an interview with Francis de Sales. For some six weeks he continued

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCLXIX.

† *Histoire and Correspondance d'Antoine Favre*, par Mugnier, vol. i, p. 476.

‡ I have already given part of the letter, containing the Saint's answer to the accusation of disloyalty in chap. 24 of vol. i, though it is out of place there. I was led into this error by following Charles Auguste de Sales, who makes the letter refer to the Bishop's former visit to Gex. I made the further mistake of saying that the letter was not found in the new edition of the *Œuvres Complètes:* it is, however, given in its correct chronological place—Tom. XVI, p. 64.

to visit the Bishop, insisting with considerable importunity upon his discussing the various doctrines which divided the old and new religions. Francis met the Baron on these occasions with his customary courtesy, and at length had the satisfaction of persuading him to renounce his errors and to become a devoted adherent of Catholicism.*

During the months of September and October the Bishop made a visitation of Chablais and Ternier-Gaillard, in which districts he preached many times, conferred the tonsure on a number of ecclesiastical candidates, reconciled churches, and consecrated altars.

It must have been soon after this journey that he received news which gave him great satisfaction. This was the information that M. de Bérulle had succeeded in founding his congregation of the Oratory in Paris. Even before the days of his episcopacy he had himself entertained the idea of a similar project. The great need of the day, after the troubled times of the religious wars, was the formation of a zealous, saintly, and learned clergy; and the Saint realized how useful such an institution as the Oratory would prove to be in providing a model of priestly perfection and serving as a seminary of exemplary pastors. At the time of his journey to Paris, in 1602, he had discussed the matter with M. de Bérulle, who had wished to place Francis at the head of the proposed congregation. The Coadjutor, however, knew that such an appointment was impossible; and, moreover, he considered that M. de Bérulle was much better qualified than himself for the task. Nevertheless, it would appear that at a later date Francis had asked permission of the Holy See to leave his diocese for a time in order to forward the formation of the Institute. This request was not granted, for the Holy See realized that the Bishop's presence in his diocese at this time was an indispensable necessity. Eventually, M. de Bérulle, overcoming the many obstacles that lay in the path of his plans, began the definite establishment of the congregation on November 11, 1611. In a letter to Mlle. Acarie the Bishop wrote: "I had desired, more than I can express, to be of service to the Holy Congregation which is now being formed under the direction of M. de Bérulle, which in my opinion will prove to be one of the most fruitful that Paris has ever seen. But I am unable to do so in any way, our Lord not finding me worthy of such a work."† It would appear that M. de Bérulle had hoped at this time to acquire the Duke of Nemours' house in Paris, and had written to the Bishop for this purpose; but the Prince had no intention of relinquishing his hôtel.‡

* C. A. de S., l. vii^me^, p. 67, vol. ii.
† E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCXLVI, p. 156.
‡ See Lettre DCCXLV.

On November 30 the Bishop again hurries off to the country of Gex, there to meet M. Lemazuyer and M. de Villarnon, the King's commissaries, on business. He succeeded in obtaining a promise that two more churches should be handed over to the Catholics, those of the Carmelites of Gex and of the parish of Allemogne. Both these buildings had been allowed by the Calvinists to fall into a very ruinous condition.* The Bishop eventually obtained possession in July of the following year. Not content with these concessions, Francis wrote several times to the Queen of France, at the same time engaging M. Lemazuyer to use his influence with the young King.†

During the winter of 1611–1612 Francis devoted much of his time to two labours, one the preparation of sermons for the next Lenten Station at Chambéry, the other the edition of the Roman Ritual for use in his diocese.

"Full of respect for the Roman liturgy," says M. Hamon, "he copied from the Roman Ritual the order of ceremonies to be observed in the administration of the sacraments, as well as the various prayers belonging to them. To these he added several forms of blessing, used in the diocese and drawn for the most part from the ancient Ritual of Geneva, giving various rules and directions such as would assist his priests in the exercise of their ministry. He furthermore enriched the work with two other pieces from this valuable collection: the first was a table of the feasts and Offices peculiar to the Church of Geneva; the second a kind of instruction in French, containing a clear and methodical abridgement of Christian doctrine, eminently suitable for teaching the people both the matter and the fundamental arguments of the Catholic faith. The book was supplied with a preface, which in itself is a wonderful testimony to the author's learning and piety."‡

In the month of February the Saint was himself the object of a miraculous cure. During the course of a cold his face became so swollen and inflamed that he feared he would be unable to say Mass. Hearing of this, Mother de Chantal sent him a relic of St Apollonia, praying him to apply it to his face. This he did, accompanying the action with the following prayer: "O my God, may it be done to me as my daughters desire, if that be thy holy will," and immediately the swelling disappeared.§

Early in March Francis made his way to Chambéry for the Lenten Station, which began on the seventh of that month. "There," says an eye-witness, "he was occupied the whole day in hearing confessions, in giving interviews to those desirous of speaking

* Lettres DCCXXVII to DCCXXX.
† Lettre DCCLII, p. 166. ‡ Hamon, vol. ii, p. 117.
§ Mugnier, *Journal*, Feb. 9, 1612. Also Lettre DCCL.

to him, in preaching at monasteries, at the Sainte-Chapelle, at houses of penitents, and to congregations at the Jesuit Church, in such a manner as scarcely to leave himself a few moments' preparation for the more formal sermons which he delivered in the presence of the Senate. Nevertheless he rose to every occasion, preached with the zeal and eloquence of an apostle, and showed the utmost oblivion of self in his intense preoccupation for the salvation of souls."*

In the midst of these labours Francis found time to write several times to the Holy See about matters which for some time had been claiming his attention. At the request of the syndics of the town he addressed a petition to the Pope, asking that a new diocese might be created under the title of Chambéry, which up to then had formed part of the diocese of Grenoble. He based his petition firstly upon the importance of the town itself, which, as the capital of Savoy and the seat of the Senate and of the State Council, was much frequented by the adjacent countries; secondly, upon the great distance between Chambéry and Grenoble, the difficulties of communication between the two places at certain seasons, and the fact that in times of war between Savoy and France the Bishop of Grenoble was perforce completely separated from his subjects of Chambéry; and thirdly, upon the difficulties experienced by a bishop whose diocese was divided over two states, and whose work was continually hampered by the jealousies and suspicions of the two courts governing those states.

It might have been thought that such weighty reasons would have been sufficient to obtain the desired reform, but once again political influence was used to the detriment of the Church. The French authorities were opposed to the suggestion, and the Bishop's petition was refused.

Another matter with which the Saint dealt at this time was the canonization of Amadeus IX, the third Duke of Savoy, who, born at Thonon in 1435, died at Verceil at the age of thirty-seven. This virtuous prince was already honoured as one of the Blessed by the people of Savoy, and his statue had been erected in several churches for the veneration of the faithful; but the Bishop of Geneva was anxious that his cause should be carried on to the final honours of canonization. Two years earlier he had already written to the Duke, urging him to take steps towards the accomplishment of his desire. "The miracles which God has wrought in favour of this great prince," wrote the Bishop, "the great esteem which the peoples entertain of his sanctity, the stories of his life which celebrate so eloquently the piety of his earthly career, are so many summonses, given to Your Highness by this holy prince, to see that there be rendered unto him the honours due to his sanctity."† Having

* Dep. de Dunant. † E. N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DCLXVII, p. 249.

obtained the support of the Duke and of other influential people, the Bishop sent his petition to Rome in a letter addressed to Pope Paul V. After a short introductory passage about the canonization of the saints, Francis goes on to the subject of his request. "Since I know, Holy Father, that many people of every rank have earnestly besought Your Holiness that you would deign to inscribe on the roll of the saints the name of the Blessed Amadeus, third Duke of Savoy, both my own desire and my duty urge me to make the same petition to Your Holiness's apostolic goodness. . . . The very majesty of the omnipotent God would seem to demand the fulfilment of our request, for thereby it will be more admirably revealed. The heavenly Jerusalem, our Mother, also awaits this favour, because of its joy that one of its citizens should be honoured by our just homage. The Church on earth, over which Your Holiness rules, also desires it, rejoicing that the name of so great a son, written in heaven, should be made holy on earth. . . . This petition is also made by the family of their Highnesses the Dukes of Savoy, whose constancy in the faith and courageous exploits in the field have both now and in the past brought comfort to the Church. It is put forward by the whole province of Savoy, and especially by this diocese of Geneva, which, ennobled by the birth of such a prince, will be filled with greater confidence in the hope of his prayers. Finally, it is supported by the very merits and miracles of Blessed Amadeus himself, which both in quality and number are so excellent and so renowned."

This petition was afterwards supported by another letter to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. "One of the accursed and condemned opinions which the infamous Calvin taught in the unhappy city of Geneva was," writes the Bishop, "contempt for the saints who reign in heaven with Christ: with this notion he strove by every means to destroy the memory of their name, to profane their relics, to burlesque their intercession, and to blaspheme against their merits and the honours which are their due." After giving the reasons already recited for the canonization of Blessed Amadeus, the writer ends as follows: "The granting of this petition will cause the deepest confusion to the enemies of the saints, will greatly console the souls of the devout, and will awaken in princes the desire of emulation. Finally, it will be a cause of rejoicing and benediction throughout the whole Church, but especially in this afflicted diocese, in which the Prince was born and bred. . . ."*

During this Lent Francis found himself obliged to deal once more with a subject which had already come under his notice in the latter part of the preceding year. This was the difficult controversy as to the power of the popes over secular rulers and temporal affairs.

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCLXXXII, p. 223.

The question had been raised, on the one hand, by writings which James I of England had published, in order to justify the oath exacted of his Catholic subjects, and, on the other, by the refutation of these writings, published by Bellarmine. The first of these was a treatise entitled *De Romano Pontifice*. Sixtus V had it placed on the Index, as containing unwarranted restrictions upon the papal power, but on the death of this Pope, the book was withdrawn from condemnation. The second work was called *Tractatus de potestate summi Pontificis in temporalibus*, and was practically a reproduction of the principles expressed in the former book. The Cardinal, striving to base the common law of the middle ages upon revelation, which made the Pope the head of all sovereigns and invested him with the right of deposing any rulers who abused their authority, taught that Jesus Christ, by commissioning his vicar on earth to rule over the nations in the spiritual order, had given to him indirectly and as a consequence, the power to regulate in temporal matters whatever was necessary for the greater good of religion, even to the extent of deposing sovereigns and transferring the crown from one individual or family to another. He did not, however, assert—as did certain other theologians—that Jesus Christ had directly given to the Pope an absolute power over temporalities as over things spiritual.

This work, which displeased Rome as being too moderate, was vigorously condemned in France, as being exaggeratedly favourable to the popes; and it caused, both in Parliament and in the University of Paris, the most violent storms. Richer, a Syndic of the Faculty, issued a publication entitled *De ecclesiastica et politica potestate*. This book was condemned by the French clergy as containing several propositions which were false, erroneous, scandalous, and heretical, and later on it was proscribed by the Holy See. Elsewhere a councillor of the Burgundian parliament named Bénigne Milletot entered the lists in defence of Richer and published his *Traité des délits communs et cas privilégiés:* as he was an intimate friend of the Bishop of Geneva, he sent the latter a copy. Francis, distressed by the reading of the work, answered in a letter which, while full of friendliness and consideration for the author, conveys a strong criticism of his opinions. "I see in your book," writes the Saint, "two things: the touch of the author's hand on the one part, and the matter and subject on the other. Of a truth I find your touch good, praiseworthy, even exquisite and rare; but the matter displeases me. In fact, if I must express that which is in my heart, I can only say that it displeases me extremely. . . .

"By natural inclination, by my upbringing, by the outcome of my ordinary mode of thought, and, as I believe, by inspiration from on high, I am led to hate all contentions and disputes amongst Catholics,

the end of which is useless: and still more do I hate those which can only result in dissensions and differences, especially during these times of ours, filled as they are with minds so inclined towards controversies, slanders, censures, and the ruination of charity.

"Indeed, I have found no liking in my mind even for certain writings of a holy and very excellent prelate, in which he has dealt with the indirect power of the Pope over princes:* not that I have passed judgement on the question itself, but because in these times, in which we have so many external enemies, I think we ought to give no cause for any disturbance within the body of the Church. . . . In fine, when kings and princes shall have received a bad impression of their spiritual father, as if he desired to take them unawares and to wrest from them that authority which God, the sovereign Father, Prince and King of all, has allotted to them, what will come of it all but a very dangerous turning away of hearts? And if they are led to believe that he has betrayed his duty, will they not in turn be greatly tempted to forget theirs?

"I have no intention of pointing out the many things which seem to me to need toning down, and content myself with telling you thus baldly, and as regards the whole, my own small opinion—nay, to speak frankly, my strong opinion—in this matter."†

Another letter, written probably from Chambéry in the spring of 1612, and addressed to a lady who has not been identified for certain, but who was, it is thought, Mme. Brulart, gives a surer indication of the Bishop's views on the subject of the dispute.

„ With regard to your question as to what authority the Pope has over the temporal affairs of kingdoms and principalities, you are asking me to give you an answer, which is as difficult as it is useless.‡

„ Difficult, not indeed, in itself, for, on the contrary, it is quite easy to reach for those minds which seek it along the path of charity; but difficult because at this present time, which abounds in ardent, keen, and contentious brains, it is difficult to say something without offending those who, extreme partisans either of the Pope or of princes, are never content to confine themselves to the limits of moderation. They do not seem to realize that one can do nothing worse for a father than to deprive him of the love of his children, and nothing worse for the children than to take from them that respect which they owe to their father.

"And I use the word 'useless,' because the Pope demands

* It is only fair to Bl. Robert Bellarmine to say that he only wrote the works complained of by order of Paul V: he himself would have preferred to have remained silent. See note iii, p. 95 of Tom. XV, E. N.

† E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCXI, p. 95.

‡ "Esgalement difficile et inutile," quoted from a letter of St Gregory to a lady.

nothing from kings and princes in this connection. He loves them all tenderly, he desires that their power should be unweakened and durable, he lives with them in peace and friendship, he does practically nothing in their states, even with regard to matters purely ecclesiastical, without their consent and goodwill. What need is there to busy oneself with an examination into the extent of his authority over temporal affairs, and, in so doing, open the door to dissension and discord?"

After mentioning the harmony that existed between Church and State in his own country, the Bishop continues:

"I tell you in all sincerity, my dear daughter, I am deeply distressed to learn that this dispute about the authority of the Pope has become a plaything and object of chatter amongst so many people who, incapable of arriving at a correct solution, confuse the question rather than make it clear, and, instead of finding an answer, destroy the chances of obtaining one. What is still worse, in so doing, they disturb the peace of many souls, rend the unity which should reign amongst Catholics, and divert these from turning their energies to the much-needed conversion of heretics."

The Bishop then goes on to give a practical exposition of his own views with regard to the discussion.

"The Pope," he writes, "is the sovereign pastor and spiritual father of Christians, because he is the supreme vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth: consequently, he has ordinary sovereign authority in matters spiritual over all Christians—emperors, kings, princes, and others—who owe him in this quality not only love, honour, reverence, and respect, but also help, succour and assistance with regard to all and against all who offend against him, or against the Church, in this spiritual authority or in its administration. So that, just as by rights natural, divine and human, everyone is allowed to use his powers and those of his allies in his just defence against a wrongful and unjust aggressor and offender, so also the Church or the Pope (for they are one and the same) can employ his own powers and those of the Church and those of Christian princes, his spiritual children, for the just defence and preservation of the rights of the Church against all those who would violate or destroy them. And all the more so because Christians, princes and others, are not allied to the Church by a simple alliance, but by an alliance which is the most powerful in its obligation, the most excellent in its dignity that can be conceived. Just as the Pope and the other prelates of the Church are obliged to surrender their lives and undergo death in order to give spiritual food and pasture to Christian kings and kingdoms, so also kings and kingdoms are reciprocally bound and obliged to maintain, at the peril of their lives and states, the Pope and the Church, their pastor and spiritual father. Such is the great

but reciprocal obligation between the Pope and kings—an obligation that is unchanging; an obligation which goes as far as death itself; a natural, divine, and human obligation, by which the Pope and the Church must supply spiritual aid to kings and kingdoms, and kings must supply temporal aid to the Pope and the Church. The Pope and the Church belong to kings, in order to nourish, sustain, and defend them with regard to all and against all in things spiritual; kings and kingdoms belong to the Church and to the Pope, in order to nourish, sustain, and defend them with regard to all and against all in matters temporal: for the fathers belong to the children, and the children to the fathers.

"Kings and ruling princes have nevertheless a temporal sovereignty with regard to which neither the Pope nor the Church has any pretensions, nor in such matters do these demand any temporal recognition. Thus, then, in order to sum up, the Pope is the most sovereign pastor and spiritual father, the king most sovereign prince and temporal lord. The authority of the one is not contrary to that of the other, but they reciprocally support each other; for the Pope and the Church excommunicate and hold as heretics those who deny the sovereign authority of kings and princes, and kings strike with their sword those who deny the authority of the Pope and the Church, or, if they do not strike them, it is in the hope that they will humble themselves and amend."*

A third document, written by the Bishop of Geneva on this question, was composed at the request of Anastasio Germonio, Bishop of Tarentaise. This prelate visited Francis, while the latter was at Chambéry, and having discussed the subject with him, asked him to put his opinions in writing. This the Bishop of Geneva did in the following words:

"On the evidence of particular information received from Paris and Dijon and of pamphlets written in the two cities, it is quite clear that the discussion anent the authority of the Holy Father over kings is spreading further and further, and the same is true of that which has for its subject a comparison between the Councils and the sovereign Pontiffs. It is clear that the majority of parliaments and statesmen, even those who are Catholics, incline towards the view which is less favourable, or rather contrary, to papal authority, this opinion appearing to them to be more in accord with the royal authority and of greater profit for that power. If this state of affairs continues, it is to be feared lest the issue result in considerable harm for that kingdom (of France) and deplorable divisions: all the more so because, as the King will be taking the administration of the state into his own hands in two or three years, it will be easy

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCLXI, p. 195. Hamon's version differs slightly from that of the E. N., and he omits the last sentence.

for those hostile to the Holy See's authority to incline his mind in that direction where he will see some likelihood of extending his rights, so great is the inclination of men to dominate, free from all restraint and dependence. Such a tendency is particularly noticeable in our days, above all amongst the young people, who are by nature rash and daring: even though, on the other hand, there is reason to believe that the King has excellent and most Christian inclinations. This desire to shake off all yokes is moreover one of the most contagious of evils, likely to pass little by little from kingdom to kingdom and from crown to crown, as has happened in the case of other similar evils. Whence it appears that the danger is considerable.

"To have the question discussed by experienced theologians does not seem to be the best of remedies, for the more ardent the debates become, the more also do minds become heated and discord become the greater. Moreover, the reasoning of the controversialists flatters the ears of the great people, not because of its logic, but because it favours their views: and there will not be wanting theologians who, for divers considerations, will embrace the cause of those who desire divisions.

"So long as the Regency continues, the most efficacious remedy would be to put the matter in friendly fashion before the Queen and the Council on behalf of His Holiness; to lament first of all that, whereas no difference has occurred between the Holy Father and the King, and whereas the Pope has shown on every occasion a truly paternal heart, devoted and sympathetic towards the welfare and consolidation of the country's prosperity, there have arisen certain keen and restless brains who are opposed to the sacred unity existing between His Holiness and His Majesty. These have the impudence to cast doubt upon the affection of the Holy Father for the King, they engineer these idle and inopportune discussions, and by this means instil into weak and unhealthy minds a sort of mistrust with regard to the sincere attachment of His Holiness for the King and his kingdom. Let His Majesty therefore impose silence upon these rash and seditious disputes. The Holy Father, on his part, will do his best, if need be, to put an end to such inopportune and useless contentions; and indeed, fruitless as they are for Catholics, these divisions are still more harmful to heretics, spoiling and delaying their chance of conversion and affording them matter for self-gratulation.

"In fine, it is necessary at the present moment to suppress and stop these discussions, both on one side and on the other. Without doubt one can indeed praise the zeal of certain preachers who have set themselves in opposition to the insolence of our adversaries; but, since it is evident that by the continuation of special pleadings,

of controversies, and of altercations the flame is fanned rather than extinguished, silence would be of greater advantage than discussion. It would be preferable also not to proceed with hypotheses, but strongly to inculcate the theses in which the hypotheses are implicitly enclosed. . . . Provided that these theses be well established, the best answer one can make to the importunities of these restless minds is to judge them unworthy of reply. And so it is necessary that at present in France all preachers should set themselves to inculcate gently, and without any violence, the unity of the Church and the devotion of Catholics for the supreme pastor, without entering upon the discussion of his particular authority over princes.

" As to those who speak ill of the pontifical authority, these ought not to be answered directly, but indirectly, lamenting that they do this without any cause and with the malicious intention of prejudicing people against the Holy See, which nevertheless has nought but the feelings of a very gentle and affectionate mother towards that kingdom. Instead of answering their statements it would then be better to attack their intentions, in order to brand these people themselves as disturbers of the public peace : and in the midst of such sermons to introduce gently these two points—the need of ecclesiastical and Christian unity and of love and devotion towards the Holy See, which is the bond of this ecclesiastical unity and communion.

" It would also be a good thing to bring about unity and understanding between the Sorbonne and the Jesuit Fathers through the mediation of wise and devoted prelates, in order that, by bringing together two oxen under the same yoke, the field of religion might be cultivated more effectively. To bring about this union, it would be necessary to make the Queen understand its importance, by showing her that if the Bishops, the Sorbonne, and the Orders were perfectly united, it would lead to the end of heresy in ten years. This union will not be so difficult to maintain, provided that the Queen is brought to realize its importance and that there are found men capable of giving skilful aid to the Nuncio and of becoming thoroughly acquainted with one another. A thing which might be very serviceable in this matter would be to recommend it to the provincials and generals of the Orders, to address affectionate briefs to the universities, and particularly to the Sorbonne, as well as to the Bishops, and to demonstrate to all how much the fatherly affection of His Holiness desires the continued welfare of that kingdom, and how much he wishes that all peoples should be taught the true and sincere obedience and submission which subjects owe to the crown.

" But before proceeding with these measures, it is necessary that there should be a conference with the Queen and the Council. It would also be very useful if His Holiness were to confer at Rome

with the ambassador and the French cardinals, and were to show these people how strong is his desire that these scandalous discussions should come to an end."*

Cardinal Borghese, to whom this memorandum was addressed, showed it to Paul V. The Pontiff praised the prudence of the author and approved of all the conciliatory measures which he proposed; but unfortunately these were neglected, and before long the disputes began all over again.

When the Lenten Station was finished at Chambéry Francis returned to Annecy. This was towards the end of the month of April, 1612. On May 9 he held a diocesan Synod, during which he formally published his *Roman Ritual*, commanding all his clergy to obtain copies within the space of two months.†

On May 26 the Bishop wrote to Charles Emmanuel, informing that Prince that the canons of S. John, of Lyons, had invited him to preach there during the next Lent, and asking permission to leave the duchy for this purpose. We learn from a later letter that Francis received no answer to this petition and therefore judged it refused. After informing the canons of this fact, the Bishop says: "You cannot but gain thereby, if you consider the question of merit, for in this matter I am inferior to all the preachers who frequent the great cities and occupy well-known pulpits such as yours. But as regards my pleasure in rendering you service and satisfaction, I think you will hardly escape a loss, since in truth my heart is full of love and respect for you, and of ardour and zeal for the increase of true piety in your town."‡

During this month the Bishop wrote an interesting letter to Mme. de la Fléchère concerning a duel in which her husband was apparently one of the seconds, thus incurring excommunication. One of the combatants was, moreover, a relative of the Saint's. "What shall we say of these men who show such attachment to the honour of this miserable world and so little for the happiness of the next? I assure you I was deeply afflicted at heart at the thought of how near to eternal damnation that dear cousin had placed himself and of how your dear husband had led him thither. Alas, what sort of friendship is it to carry each other on in the direction of hell?

"We must beg God that he grant them to see his holy light and have compassion on them. . . . However, in order that your husband may not remain miserably in his sin and excommunication, I enclose herewith a note, which I send him, in order that he may go to confession and receive absolution. I pray God to send him the requisite contrition for this."§

* E. N., Tom. XV, p. 183. † Mugnier, *Journal*, p. 137.
‡ E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCXCII, p. 242.
§ E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCLXXVI, p. 215.

It was during the summer that Francis was called into an affair which proved the high esteem in which he was held even amongst followers of the Protestant religion: for a Calvinist of Geneva, M. de Cambiague, who for some time had had a lawsuit with the Count de Saint Alban, came to the Bishop and asked him to act as arbitrator. "What?" answered the Saint, "have you enough confidence in me for this—who am reckoned by the Genevans as their enemy?"—"I know that you are a just man," answered the Protestant nobleman, "and that in everything you only desire that which is right." Francis consented to undertake the difficult task, and, accordingly, made his way to Bonneville on July 10 to hear the case from both sides. He managed to show such discriminating perception of the rights of both parties that everyone was satisfied, and the litigation brought to an end.* Perhaps an even more wonderful witness to his integrity and skill was the settling of a case between his brothers on the one part and two gentlemen on the other, which latter consented to his arbitration without fear that his family feeling would warp his judgement.

In this month of July he made another journey into the country of Gex. Up to this time, in spite of continual negotiations he had only been able to gain possession of half a dozen parishes—Gex, Asserens, Farges, Divonne, Chalex, and Allemogne; now, however, thanks to the kind offices of Lemazuyer and especially to the intervention of Queen Marie de Médicis, his efforts were crowned with success. Two royal commisaries, MM. de Milletot and de Brosse, came to Gex and placed the Bishop in official possession of some sixteen churches. The Genevan deputies, however, were not discouraged, and, continuing their opposition, succeeded in causing the Bishop a considerable amount of disappointment. Even in the case of those churches which were restored to the Catholics, there seems to have been much to be done in certain instances, on account of their condition. Thus, we learn, the church at Sergy was found in the most ruinous condition.†

However, on the whole, the affair had terminated in a satisfactory manner, and at the beginning of August Francis wrote a letter to the Queen thanking her for her intervention.

Some weeks after his return from Gex Francis celebrated the Jubilee of Notre Dame de Liesse, which was held every seven years. The day before the opening—September 6—he blessed a new standard which he delivered to the Captain of the Town, took part in the procession from the Cathedral to the Church of Notre Dame, and conducted the day's ceremonial there by officiating at the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Two days later, on the feast

* Dep. de Michel Favre; C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 76, vol. ii.

† *Journal*, p. 140.

of Our Lady's Nativity, he pontificated at Mass and preached in the afternoon. "Of a verity," he wrote shortly afterwards to a lady, "we had a very great crowd here for the Jubilee, and, what is more important, it was productive of much good."*

The people of Lyons were not the only ones who desired to hear the Saint's preaching. With regard to the same Lent of 1613 the Bishop had received an invitation to occupy the pulpit of the church of St Benedict in Paris, and he was very desirous of accepting this call, the more so that it came through M. Deshayes. But once again it was found impossible to obtain the Duke's permission, even after the recommendation of influential people in Rome. In a letter, written on October 3, the Bishop voices his disappointment to his friend in Paris: "God knows well that I was preparing a heart quite new, and larger, it seems to me, in order to go yonder and give voice to his holy and divine words: firstly, to give glory to his divine Majesty on such a fair and worthy occasion; and then to give satisfaction to him who called me thither with so much love and courage. Moreover, out of a certain excess of love for this design, I was promising myself that, preaching now somewhat more naturally, solidly, and, to put it in one word between ourselves, more apostolically than I used to ten years ago, you would have liked my sermons, not merely out of regard for me, but for themselves."†

On the last day of October Francis had the happiness of installing his Daughters of the Visitation in the house which they had bought on the right of the Thiou. He preached there during Advent.

Another great consolation which came to the Saint during this winter was the conversion of a number of Calvinists. Perhaps the most notable of these was an ex-religious named Nicolas Bartoloni, who had gone over to Calvinism many years before and had been living as a married man in Geneva. Touched by remorse, he came to Annecy and placed himself in the hands of Francis de Sales: the Bishop received his abjuration, reconciled him to the Church, obtained for him leave to celebrate Mass, and also secured for him a prebend at Sion in Valais.

On February 12, 1613, Francis also received into the Church eleven or twelve Protestants, to whom he had been giving instructions for some time. Before the ceremony took place in St Dominic's the Bishop preached on the advantage of spiritual Communion. During the course of his sermon "he became deeply moved at the thought of the love of Jesus Christ, annihilated, as it were, for us in

* See a most interesting account of the opening of the Jubilee in the E. N., Tom. XV, p. 400. It is full of instructive details, but too long to be given here.

† E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCCX, p. 271.

the Sacrament of the altar. Suddenly the attention of the faithful was attracted by the emotion of a public sinner who happened to be listening to the sermon. As the saintly preacher, carried away by the ardour of his charity, became more and more eloquent, the tears of the man in question became more abundant. Finally, when the Bishop, terminating his sermon, exclaimed several times: *Let the whole world perish, if it refuse to live in Jesus Christ*, the sinner arose, and, striking his breast, begged pardon aloud of God and of those around him for the scandal of his deeds." When the ceremony of reconciliation was over the Bishop invited all the new converts to dine with him. Later on, when someone asked him whether he experienced a greater joy from the conversion of the Catholic sinner than from that of the twelve Calvinists, he answered: "I rejoice equally at the return of either. But the return of heretics is a greater subject of consolation for me. They come back from a greater distance, since they have not in their hearts the real faith which gives a great hope of salvation."*

* *Année*, Feb. 12.

CHAPTER V*
(1613)

Death of Baron de Lux—Affair of M. Berthelot—M. de Charmoisy in undeserved disgrace—Francis goes to Turin—Interview with the Duke of Savoy—Goes to Milan—Mass at St Charles's shrine—Negotiations with Barnabites about the College of Annecy—Feast of the Sacred Shroud at Turin—Preaches—Incident of the mozzetta—Returns to Annecy—Journey to Gex—Miracles at Annecy—Charmoisy released from banishment—Francis goes to Belley—Regulations for the clergy of Gex—Correspondence with Louis XIII

IN a letter, written to Mother de Chantal by the Bishop about January 10, he tells of the death of Baron de Lux, who had done much for Francis in connection with the revival of religion in the French portion of the diocese of Geneva. The Baron was the victim of one of those cowardly assassinations which were so common in France during this period: he was killed on January 5, apparently without any chance of self-defence, by the Chevalier de Guise, who pretended that de Lux had been one of the instigators of his father's murder. This tragedy was followed by another, for Claude de Malain, the victim's son, challenged the Chevalier to a duel and was himself killed in turn by the redoubtable Guise.

On the night of Ash Wednesday, 1613, occurred an incident which was to give Francis and Antoine Favre a great deal of trouble. The Duke of Nemours had as one of his secretaries a young man, of unknown origin, named M. Berthelot. In gaining the secretaryship he had ousted M. de Charmoisy, and by his domineering manners had offended a number of noblemen, amongst whom were the Bishop's brothers, Bernard and Janus. Another of these noblemen was M. de la Tour, commendatory Abbot of Talloires, a priest, who was in the ambassadorial service of Savoy and who was apparently a somewhat stormy character. At any rate, on the night in question, he succeeded in administering a thrashing to M. Berthelot in the woods of Sonnaz, and the furious and humilated secretary took the matter to his master, naming, as instigators of the outrage, M. de Charmoisy and MM. Bernard and Janus de Sales. The Duke of Nemours was indignant, perhaps beyond all justice, at this injury done to one of his favourites, and M. de Charmoisy was ordered to

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 2.

confine himself to the limits of his estates at Marclaz in disgrace, without any definite and judicial proof of his guilt. In the sequel his banishment lasted ten months. As to M. de la Tour, he was confined to his own house for a time, but otherwise seems to have escaped very lightly, for which he had probably to thank his position as ambassador and confidential agent of the Duke of Savoy. Nothing definite was done to Bernard and Janus de Sales, but they incurred the disfavour of Nemours, and, along with M. de Charmoisy, were the cause of much anxiety to the Bishop and Antoine Favre, who were necessarily involved to some extent in the disgrace fallen upon relatives and friends. That Francis was quite convinced of the innocence of the accused parties is evident from a letter which he wrote to M. Deshayes on March 28, 1613. "You will see, I am assured," he says, "from the letter written by M. de Charmoisy how, immediately on the departure of Madame de Charmoisy, he had the unhappiness of seeing himself banished from this town by the express command of His Highness, who ordered him to withdraw and never to return, under the most erroneous impression which His Grace of Nemours has received from certain slanderers, to the effect that the thrashing received by M. Berthelot had been instigated by M. de Charmoisy: concerning which affair my Lord of Nemours has shown such intense resentment that we are all astonished thereat. And it very nearly happened that one of my brothers, the Knight of Malta, was consigned to prison (although during the whole time of the quarrel he was with me at Sales), simply because he is a great friend of the Abbot of Talloires and that he visited him frequently after the affair of the thrashing."*

It was to try and get justice done in this affair, that Francis hastened a visit to Turin, which had already been amongst his plans. When Mother de Chantal had been dangerously ill, the Bishop had made a vow to go on pilgrimage to the tomb of St Charles at Milan if she recovered. This vow was still to be accomplished. Moreover, in addition to the matter mentioned above, there were several other important affairs, for the furtherance of which he desired to obtain the Duke's consent and assistance. He desired to place his Institute of the Visitation under Charles Emmanuel's protection, and to secure the Prince's concurrence in the founding of its projected establishments within the duchy. There was also the matter of the College of Annecy: this establishment had fallen upon evil days under the direction of lay masters, and the Bishop was anxious to find some teaching Order who would be willing to undertake its reorganization. For these and other matters it was necessary to obtain the Duke's approval. Consequently on April 15 he set out on the road to Turin, accompanied by several ecclesiastics and laymen:

* E. N., Tom. XV, Lettre DCCCLXII, p. 361.

amongst these were MM. de Blonay and Floccard, Bernard and Jean-François de Sales, MM. Georges Roland, François Favre, and Noel Roget. "His first intention," says Charles Auguste de Sales, "was to make the journey on foot; but there was not one of all his friends who did not strive to dissuade him from doing this, saying and remonstrating rightly that neither the season, nor his age, nor his constitution, which was already much impaired by so many harassing labours, would allow it. And so, giving way to their counsels, he mounted his horse. . . ."* It must be borne in mind that this journey, so far as regards its main object, was a pilgrimage: consequently the Bishop took care that its sacred aspect should be kept well to the fore. He often made his companions join with him in vocal prayer, gave them each morning the points of their meditation, and from time to time would encourage their fervour by devotional exhortations. The Marquis de Lullin, who also accompanied him at this time, afterwards gave the following testimony in his formal deposition: "During this journey the saintliness of the Bishop's actions and words made an impression upon me such as I cannot well describe. He exhorted me with urgent and persuasive eloquence to take up the practice of every Christian virtue, showing me that it is easier than is commonly thought to combine solid virtue and military duty; that devotion is not stern and unsociable, as some would have it; that it can be cultivated at the court as well as in the cloister; that it has graced the lives of the greatest dignitaries; that great kings have practised it on the throne and great captains in the midst of battles, such as David and St Louis, Judas Machabeus and his brothers, who in the midst of their fighting were mighty warriors and saints of God; and he then explained to me with an inspired eloquence how the law of God is just, beautiful, attractive, useful, lovable, easy to observe for anyone who desires to love God and to put trust in his fatherly goodness. At other times he would set himself to emphasize the vanity of the world, the fickleness of fortune, the small reliance to be placed on the favour of the mighty and on earthly greatness itself, revealing to us God alone as the sole foundation on which one can rest in safety."

When the journey came to the end of its first stage at Turin, Francis hastened to the Ducal palace, to do homage to Charles Emmanuel, who received him with all the respect due to his character and office. The Bishop's first care was to put before his Prince the true story of the Berthelot affair, but he found the Duke so strongly prejudiced against the accused gentlemen, that he thought it wiser to drop the matter for a time. He was more successful in his recommendation of the Visitation, for Charles Emmanuel, after listening

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 80, vol. ii.

to a description of the new Order and its objects, immediately gave it his unqualified approval, and in fact, a year later, wrote to the Senate to recommend it to the favour of that assembly. The Bishop then passed on to the question of the College of Annecy, described its condition, and explained that the Jesuits had so much work on their hands that they were unable to undertake this new task. To this the Duke answered: "Do you know what must be done? If the Jesuits refuse, perhaps the Barnabites will accept the position: they are fathers who persevere with their colleges, when these are placed in their hands—men of learning and of true religion, who, moreover, are very willing to place themselves at the disposal of the Bishops. They are the sons of our Saint Charles, to whose tomb you are about to go. We have some of them in this town and some at Verceil, but their principal house is at Milan. Go and see them, and sound them as to their attitude towards the College of Annecy: for my part, I do not think that you will leave them without finding yourself completely satisfied."*

Having completed the first part of his business at Turin, Francis continued his journey by way of Verceil, and arrived at Milan on April 25, where he was received with full honours by the Spanish Governor, Don Juan de Mendoza, and by the Archbishop, Cardinal Frederico Borromeo, who was a cousin of the great St Charles. Francis, however, desired to maintain the rôle of a simple pilgrim, and he sought hospitality at the Barnabite convent. Here, to his great happiness and edification, he was assigned the very room used by St Charles, when the latter made a retreat in that house. On the day after the Bishop's arrival he celebrated Mass at the shrine of the Saint, during which office he was manifestly moved and filled with spiritual ecstasy. He remained for several hours prostrated in thanksgiving before the shrine, praying earnestly for the graces which had distinguished the Saint, asking that he might be enabled to govern the diocese of Geneva as the holy Cardinal had governed that of Milan, and imploring from Heaven the strength of soul needed to support him beneath the weight of the many crosses which his position impelled him to shoulder. When Francis and his companions had returned to the convent, the latter were so full of the beauty and magnificence of the cathedral that they could talk of nothing else. Francis, however, took no part in their conversation. Surprised at his silence, they asked him his opinion on the subject of their discussion. "To tell you the truth," he answered, "I saw nothing of it all."—"But, at least, my Lord," said one of the others, "you must have noticed the richness of the vestments which were given to you for your Mass: the very brilliance of the precious stones with which they were covered must surely have attracted

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 81, vol. ii.

your attention?"—"I never noticed them," replied the Bishop; "the thought of the great Cardinal's sanctity and of the inward beauty of his soul filled me to such an extent that I had no room in my mind for the external magnificence of church or vestments." That evening he returned to the chapel of the shrine and there passed the night in prayer.*

Having accomplished the primary object of his visit to Milan—the fulfilment of his vow—Francis next turned his attention to other duties. The first of these was to make a formal call on the Archbishop and the Governor of Milan to thank them for their courtesies. Then he devoted himself to the question of the College of Annecy. During his three days' stay with the Barnabites he made a thorough study of their work and spirit, and, having ascertained that the fathers had every qualification for the task which the Duke desired to assign to them, he offered the direction of his College to their General. This offer, to his great satisfaction, was accepted.

As the feast of the Sacred Shroud of Turin was now drawing near, the Bishop began his return journey to that city, visiting on his way the town of Novara, where the body of St Bernard of Menthon was buried. Here he noticed with grief that the Saint's shrine showed signs of neglect, and he urged the canons of the church to preserve it in greater honour and veneration.

On his arrival at Turin he was asked by the Duke to preach on the occasion of the feast, which fell on May 4. His acceptance of this invitation made him the central figure of a curious incident. According to the etiquette of the time, a bishop had no right to wear the mozzetta outside his diocese, unless invited to do so by the ordinary. Now on this occasion the Archbishop of Turin forgot to extend this courtesy to Francis de Sales. The latter "appeared in the pulpit, therefore, wearing rochet and stole. The Duke immediately complained to the Archbishop with some vigour for allowing the Bishop of Geneva to preach without the marks of his dignity, like any simple priest of the diocese. Not contented with the prelate's excuses, the Duke insisted that the latter should take off his own mozzetta and straightway send it to Francis de Sales; when the mozzetta was brought to our Saint in the middle of the sermon, he stopped, turned towards the Archbishop, bowed to him, and said: 'Your Grace, I do not deserve this honour, but I accept it in obedience to your will.' He kissed the mozzetta, put it on, and then continued his sermon. . . . At the end of his discourse, he took it off before leaving the pulpit and bore it himself to the Archbishop, accompanying this restoration with words of such charming humility that all present were intensely edified. 'Everything,'

* *Année*, April 18.

said one of them, 'in this saintly Bishop is a sermon, even his very robes.'"*

Francis was also invited by the Duke to be one of the prelates who exposed the Holy Shroud to the veneration of the people. An account of what happened on this occasion is found in a letter written a year after the event to Mme. de Chantal. "A year ago about this hour of the day I was at Turin, exhibiting the Holy Shroud in the midst of a great crowd. Several drops of sweat, falling from my face, dropped upon the Holy Shroud itself, and thereupon, within my heart, I uttered this prayer: 'O Saviour of my life, deign to mingle my unworthy sweat with thine and infuse into my blood, my life, and my affections the merits of this sacred moisture.' My dear mother, the Prince Cardinal was angered because my sweat fell upon the Holy Shroud, but it came into my mind to tell him that our Saviour was not so nicely sensitive, and that he only shed his own sweat and blood in order to mingle them with ours, so as to give them the price of eternal life. And so may our sighs be joined with his that they ascend before the Eternal Father like the smoke of fragrant incense."†

The Bishop remained for a fortnight in Turin, employing all his efforts to obtain the vindication of the gentlemen wrongfully accused of participation in the Berthelot affair. As regards his brothers he succeeded so well that the Duke raised the property of Thorens-Sales to the dignity of a barony in favour of Bernard: this was done, according to the letters patent, "both for the good services rendered to our house by M. de Boisy of glorious memory, and out of consideration for our very dear and well-beloved loyal counsellor and client, the Bishop of Geneva, whose qualities we hold in special recognition." For M. de Charmoisy and the others the Bishop could obtain nothing better than hopes of a vindication. Anxious to return to Annecy for the feast of Pentecost, he left to M. de Blonay the task of obtaining the liberty of the accused, and himself quitted Turin on May 18, 1613.

During his return journey he unconsciously gave another example of the manner in which his mind continually found opportunities for praising and loving Almighty God. As he passed through the country of Mont Cenis, he was heard to express his admiration for the divine Providence on account of the fact that, in spite of the terrible hardships of that territory both in winter and summer, there were found people hardy enough to dwell therein and to give assistance to those who were forced to travel through the district: for, were it not for these inhabitants, scarcely anyone would have been able to make their way through such difficult country. "How

* *Année*, May 5.

† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMLXXI, p. 177. I have ventured to give a more literal rendering of St Francis's words than is found in his biographers.

is it that they do not prefer to earn their living in Turin, or Milan, or Lyons, or elsewhere? Would they not be better off than in this place? How wonderfully indeed does the great King of the universe dispose of all people and things!"*

On May 20 Francis wrote to M. des Hayes in Paris, telling his friend that, though the Duke had treated him with every kindness and honour, permission to go and preach in Paris was nevertheless still refused on account of the old political prejudice and distrust. He also complains of the action of a Parisian publisher who had brought out an edition of the *Defence of the Standard of the Cross* without consulting him, under a pretentious title which he describes as "impudent." "Nothing," writes the Bishop, "is more contrary to my taste than an ambitious title," and he quotes a poet of Savoy in support of his dislike: "'I hate the architect who, out ofa ll reason, builds up a gateway larger than the house.'" He also tells Des Hayes that he has promised the publication of his book on the Love of God to Pierre Rigaud of Lyons.

Francis arrived in Annecy on Saturday, May 25, and on the next day, the feast of Pentecost, sang High Mass in the cathedral. An incident occurred during this Mass which demonstrates how much the liturgical taste of the period needed the restraining hand of a Congregation of Rites. The canons had arranged in the roof of the building a contrivance representing clouds from which after the elevation a dove was to be released in the midst of flames, in order to represent the mystery of the day. For some reason or other, the machinery failed to function properly, and the flames did not appear. The dove, however, was successfully released, and, after flying about the cathedral for a time, came down towards the altar and found rest upon the head of the celebrant, to the wonder and delight of all present. The calm dignity of the Bishop was undisturbed by this extraordinary incident, and, without making any movement to frighten the bird away until it chose to go of its own accord, he remained unmoved and completely absorbed in the prayers and ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.† That evening the Bishop preached to the people in the cathedral, when, alluding to his pilgrimage to Milan, he said: "I bring you the blessing of the holy Archbishop of Milan. In doing so I feel obliged to address you with the same words which St Anthony spoke to his disciples after his visit to the cell of St Paul the Hermit: 'I have just been paying honour to the relics of the sanctity of one of God's great saints, in comparison with whom I am but the shadow and ghost of a bishop, unworthy even to kiss the prints of his feet.'"‡

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 84 of vol. ii.

† C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 85 of vol. ii. Also dep. of Rendu and F. Favre.

‡ *Année*, May 25.

In spite of the weariness entailed by his travels, Francis gave himself no rest, but plunged at once into the mass of business that awaited him. The first task was to call a meeting of the Council of Annecy and to put before it his negotiations with the Barnabites in relation to the college of the town. On his recommendation, the Council consented that the direction of that establishment should be formally offered to the fathers. Another matter that gave him continued trouble was the banishment of M. de Charmoisy. In order to put an end to this injustice he wrote a number of letters to the Duke of Nemours. From all sides people sought his help, sometimes with regard to their family affairs, sometimes with regard to their souls, and the number and diversity of his letters, written in the midst of the ordinary administrative business of a large diocese, are an amazing witness to his diligence. He complains himself that he has no time for study. In a letter, written in the autumn to the Bishop of Dol, he says: "I am in a continual turmoil, incessantly caused by the varied business of this diocese, so that there is not a single day when I can turn to my poor books, which once I used to love so much, and which now I dare no longer love, lest I make still more cruel the divorce which separates me from them."*

In the month of July, 1613, at the time when Mme. de Chantal was called to Burgundy by the death of her father-in-law, the Bishop journeyed once more to Gex in order to meet the Duke de Bellegarde. This nobleman, after having transacted the public business which had called them together, desired the Saint to help him in the guidance of his conscience, and, for this purpose, made a general confession of his whole life. When Francis returned to Annecy, he was seized by one of his attacks of fever: nevertheless he continued his work, and, amongst other matters, drew up for the Duke de Bellegarde a *Memorial*, or examination of conscience which he sent to his friend on August 24.

It is quite evident, from two incidents related by his biographers, that by now the people of the diocese looked upon Francis as a saint, and it is equally certain that God chose to approve of this belief by granting to his servant the power of effecting instantaneous and miraculous cures. Thus, about this time, seven or eight unfortunate beings, whose symptoms indicated that they were possessed by evil spirits, were brought to the Bishop's residence in the hope that he would free them from their affliction. Francis was always very prudent in these cases, taking every care to distinguish real cases of possession from those which he judged might be rather epilepsy or insanity. This is probably why, in the present case, he spent a considerable time watching these people attentively and

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMXIII, p. 69.

studying them in silence. His procedure was evidently too slow for the patience of his favoured attendant, Canon Georges Rolland, who had no doubt as to his master's powers to deal very simply and effectively with such cases. It was part of his very loyalty. Coming up behind the Bishop, M. Rolland said to him: "My Lord, why do you not speak to these poor people? They have the fullest confidence in you, and are waiting for you to say something to them. Even if you only utter four or five words, it will satisfy them." —"Well," answered the Bishop, smiling, "I will speak to them," and, turning to his little audience, he said: "Look you, I am delighted to have M. Rolland teaching me how to work miracles." Francis then went on to give them words of instruction and consolation, laid his hands upon them, blessed them, and sent them away. The event was a justification of M. Rolland, for the poor folk went home, cured of their infirmities. A somewhat similar miracle was wrought by the Saint in favour of some people brought to him by their relatives from the neighbourhood of La Roche Sevin. These seemed to have been in more parlous condition, for their almost superhuman antics and contortions horrified the citizens of Annecy. The Bishop, however had no trouble with them: he spoke to them, heard their confessions, gave them Holy Communion, and sent them home with his blessing. And these people also were cured of their trouble.*

There is an interesting letter, written probably in October, to some persons unknown, dealing with the ablutions given in those days to the faithful after Communion. These persons had complained that the ablutions were offered to them in a glass: the Bishop explained to them that this usage was correct, and was so carried out in order that the people might fully realize that what was given to them in this way was only wine, administered for their own convenience, and not the Precious Blood itself. The Saint had already issued regulations for this custom in his Ritual. In the present letter he also explains briefly the Church's doctrine as to Communion under one kind alone.†

In another letter, written on October 4 to the Duke of Nemours, the Bishop conveys his thanks to that Prince for the permission granted to M. de Charmoisy to leave his domain of Marclaz, where he had been commanded to remain in a kind of imprisonment. He was not, however, allowed as yet to present himself at Annecy, and was still an object of the Duke's disfavour.‡

About the middle of October Francis paid a visit to his friend, the Bishop of Belley, for the space of ten days: he also visited Bons

* C. A. de Sales, l. viii^me^, p. 87 of vol. ii.
† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMXXI, p. 81.
‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre CMXXIII, p. 84.

on the Furan, where there was a Cistercian abbey, founded by Margaret of Savoy in the twelfth century. On his return to Annecy he was attacked by a trouble in his legs from which he occasionally suffered : he nevertheless continued his labours, giving several interviews to the Marquis de Lans and drawing up important regulations with regard to ecclesiastical affairs in the country of Gex.

He ordained that in future the Offices of divine worship should be celebrated in eight churches, namely, Gex, Farge, Péron, Chalex, Cessy, Divone, Thoiry, and Sacconay. He ordained that the parish priests should maintain strict residence, under penalty of being fined a sum proportionate to their absence, fixed the times for Mass and Vespers, ordered that on Sundays both sermon and catechism should be given in the churches, and directed that the antiphon in honour of our Lady should be sung every Saturday. He also commanded that prayers for the dead should be recited at fixed times. He assigned to the Catholic schoolmaster of Gex a salary of nine hundred florins (about 414 francs)* ; ordered all patrons to re-establish their chapels under pain of losing their patronage ; nominated the Curé of Gex as ecclesiastical administrator of the whole bailiwick ; ordained that the Capuchin fathers should receive from this administrator wine and corn according to their needs, and that he should undertake nothing of importance without taking them into consultation.†

Francis, however, was unable to provide a full remedy for all the evils which existed in the religious affairs of this province. On account of the tenacity with which the Protestant ministers held on to ecclesiastical property, the priests and their churches were kept in the greatest poverty. Again and again the Bishop made appeals to the French Court. Louis XIII, restricted, as he was, by his minority, was unable at the moment to give efficient help, though he fully understood and appreciated the Bishop's troubles. He nevertheless sent a sum of 300 crowns for any repairs that might be considered most urgent in the churches of the district. Francis acknowledges this gift in a letter dated July 31, 1614 : "The Catholics of Gex and myself have received the offering of 300 crowns, which Your Majesty has given for the repair of the churches, with very humble respect and thanksgiving, not only because the favours which come from so high a source are always greatly to be esteemed, but also because they are, as it were, the pledge of still greater benefits in the future ; for this cause we continue to hope that Your Majesty's royal goodness will look with compassionate eyes upon the misery to which heresy has reduced this poor province,

* This is M. Hamon's calculation. M. Gonthier reckons the florin to have been worth more than 40 centimes by 14. Hence this sum would be 630 francs.

† C. A. de S., l. viii^{me}, p. 88 of vol. ii.

in order to pour forth in its help the favours and assistance which are capable of remedying its ills. . . ."*

But that which distressed the Bishop more than this matter of poverty was that, though Catholic France was in power over the district of Gex, yet the Calvinists were still able to use their political influence to prevent the free exercise of the Catholic faith throughout its towns and villages. In a letter to Mgr. Camus he writes: "What a humiliation it is that, though we have *the sword of the spirit*" (*which is the word of God. Eph. vi*, 17) "in our hands, yet, like mere agents of the will of the temporal magistrate, we must strike when he orders and cease striking when he so commands, and that we are deprived of the principal key of those given to us by our Saviour, which is that of judgement, discernment, and knowledge in the use of our sword. 'The enemy hath put out his hand to all her desirable things; for she hath seen the Gentiles enter into her sanctuary, of whom thou gavest commandment that they should not enter into thy church.'"†

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMLXXXI, p. 192.
† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMXCIV, p. 217.

CHAPTER VI*
(1613–1614)

Francis goes to Chambéry for arbitration with Chapter of Belley—At Annecy is persecuted by the lawyer, Pellet—Deputation from Matthias I, Emperor of Germany—The Barnabites take over the college of Annecy—Death of Gallois de Sales—Letter of protest against the exclusion of the clergy from the States Council of Gex—Duke of Nemours returns to Annecy—Francis blesses foundation-stone of new monastery for the Visitation—War with Spain—Francis goes to Moutiers—Also to Sion, in Valais, for consecration of new bishop—His letters about the festivities and politics of Valais.

IN the early days of April, 1614, Francis went to Chambéry in order to visit M. de Charmoisy and also to settle a dispute with the Chapter of Belley. The matter of this dispute related to the right of nominating priests to the parishes of the deanery of Ceyserieu, which had been attached to the cathedral of Belley by Paul V. By reason of this fact and also by virtue of an agreement, made in the fourteenth century between the Bishop of Geneva and the dean, the canons claimed the right to nominate curés to all the parishes of the deanery. For certain reasons Francis resisted this claim. He agreed, however, with the representatives of the canons at Chambéry to submit the matter to arbitration. Judgement was given on April 5, and the right of nomination to twenty-one parishes out of thirty-six was granted in favour of the chapter of Belley.

It was about this time that the Saint was subjected to considerable persecution from a lawyer, named Pellet. This man, it appears, was under obligation to pay certain dues to the diocese. Francis, though very long-suffering with regard to wrongs against himself personally, was always equally firm in maintaining the rights of his episcopacy, and he felt obliged to enforce these in the present instance by application to the courts, in which he won his case. The lawyer took his revenge in a spirit of intense hatred by spreading amongst his acquaintance all kinds of calumnies against the Bishop, decrying him on every possible occasion and doing all that was possible to ruin his character. Francis, who was perfectly aware of this persecution, took no notice of it and maintained a charitable silence. One day, however, when he saw Pellet in the street, he

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 3.

went up to him, and, taking him by the hand, said: "I know that you wish me ill, and that you take every opportunity of destroying my character. Do not deny it: I am perfectly aware of the fact. But I want you to know that, even if you were to go so far as to destroy one of my eyes, I would still look upon you affectionately with the other." Pellet found no word to say: but his enmity was not overcome by this generosity, for he continued to hate the Bishop to the end and caused him continual trouble.

There is a divergence of opinion as to whether it was about this time that Francis received an invitation from Matthias I, Emperor of Germany, to attend a Diet, for the purpose of organizing a war against the Turks. The editors of the *Edition Nouvelle* place this invitation in the early part of 1613. Francis, as Bishop and Prince of Geneva, was also Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, and as such received acknowledgement from its head. By way of protest against the wrongful expulsion of the bishops of Geneva from their see, the bearer of the invitation had orders to proceed to that city, to dismount before the gates of the episcopal palace, and to request an interview with the Bishop on the part of the Emperor. It is interesting to know that this ceremony was carried out, doubtless to the annoyance or, perhaps, the sardonic amusement of the Genevans. On receiving the only possible answer, the imperial messenger repaired to Annecy and there delivered his invitation. Francis replied that he would have been glad and flattered to attend the Diet, but that his circumstances made it an impossibility. "The rebellion of the Genevan heretics," he wrote, "who with the greatest perfidy despoiled this episcopal see of every means of human assistance, makes it impossible for me to do the good that I would."*

Francis desired about this time to establish a Carthusian monastery in the neighbourhood of Thonon. He had at first proposed to the Duke of Savoy the idea of restoring the ancient abbey of Filly, and of inviting thither the Carthusians of Vallan. When this project came to naught, he asked on their behalf for the priory of Ripaille; but, though this suggestion afterwards materialized, it was not to do so during his own time.

Meanwhile the Bishop continued to give his attention to the affairs of the college of Annecy. He had, as we have seen, already proposed to the authorities of the town that the Barnabite fathers should be placed in charge of this institution, and so strong had been his recommendation, that the civic council had consented to his wishes. As soon as he had informed the Barnabites of this decision, they had sent three of their religious to take possession of the college in the name of their society.

These were Dom Juste Guérin, who afterwards became Bishop

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre DCCCLXXIV, p. 4.

of Geneva; Father Simplicien, well-known for his learning and virtue; and Dom Maurice, who, however, did not remain long at Annecy. When the General of the Barnabites sent them to their new work, he forgot to nominate one of them as superior, and Dom Juste Guérin and Father Simplicien engaged in a delightful contest of humility, each one insisting that the other should be the superior. Eventually the former had his way, taking upon himself the duties of bursar or procurator, while Father Simplicien was placed in command. As soon as this matter was amicably settled, the Bishop went, on July 5, 1614, to instal them in the college. In a speech full of praise for the Barnabite Order, he made apt use of the saying of Themistocles—*Perieramus nisi periessemus*—pointing out that it had been the very hopelessness of the college's condition which had been the occasion of its salvation. If matters had been less bad, they would not have had the good fortune to obtain the help of the fathers. This installation was the first of many favours which he bestowed upon the society. He delighted in their society, and used to call himself a Barnabite; he invited them to his table and would go in turn to dine in their refectory; and he many times officiated, preached, and gave catechism in their church. On one occasion, when he was speaking about St Paul and showing that the Apostle by his complete correspondence with grace was able in all truth to exclaim: *I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me*, he was suddenly invaded by such an intensity of divine love that he remained for some time in ecstasy.

In spite of a certain amount of opposition from one or two quarters the Barnabite fathers did excellent work in Annecy. Father Simplicien took care to bring to the college a number of experienced masters: one of the most celebrated of these was Father Baranzano, who is said to have been a friend of the English chancellor, Bacon, and who published several learned works. The titles of one or two of these books are distinguished by a certain quaintness; one was *Uranoscopia, seu universa Doctrina de coelo;* another bore the sub-title of *Campus philosophicus*. Under the new administration the college began to flourish once more, and students came to it in great numbers. The fathers also undertook work external to that of the college. Thus the Superior gave lectures to the clergy on moral theology, at which the Bishop himself assisted when he could; and the other fathers taught catechism to the faithful on Sundays in four of the town churches.

At the end of July, 1614, Francis, writing to Mother de Chantal, tells her of the death of his brother Gallois, Seigneur of Boisy and of other family estates. "We have just performed the last rites," he says, "over my very dear brother of Boisy. He died a short time ago in my arms, and I myself closed his eyes and mouth. He had

opened his heart to me in such a Christian manner in the sacrament of confession that I have every reason for hoping that God has received his soul into the joys of his mercy. For the rest, I must say it is astonishing how much he suffered in every part of his body for several months, being forced to remain always in the same position; but he endured it all with such remarkable piety and patience that we might well name him the Job of our family."*

On August 1, 1614, Francis wrote to Baron de Villars, Bailiff of Gex, a letter which shows that his gentleness did not prevent him from voicing strongly his opinion of what was right where ecclesiastical affairs are concerned. A meeting of the States of the Bailiwick of Gex had recently been held, at which the Calvinist ministers had presented themselves as forming part of the body of the Church. This placed the Bailiff in a dilemma, and, by way of evading the difficulty, he had ordered that both Catholic priests and Calvinist ministers should withdraw from the meeting.

"I have been informed," wrote the Bishop, "of all that took place at the assembly of the Three States of your Bailiwick to the prejudice of that one of the three which has always been the first and the most favoured in France. As this body is under my charge in those parts, allow me, Sir, to complain to you first, and to beg of you to see that this injustice between you and these good ecclesiastics be set right, before the duty of my office obliges me to make complaint elsewhere. I honour you with all my heart, and all our Church people regard you as their kind father; but in this matter which relates to the glory of God and the respect due to the ecclesiastical state, we can employ naught but the utmost frankness. I ask you, therefore, to reflect, Sir, that the Huguenots do not only not belong to the clergy, but hate both the name and the sacred reality which it signifies, and never has it been seen that the ministers formed a body apart in France. It is not reasonable to put Dagon upon the altar along with the Ark of the Covenant: and God has so declared. . . ."†

In June the Duke of Nemours returned to Annecy for a short time after an absence of fourteen years. Things were not running too smoothly between this Prince and Charles Emmanuel, and were gradually tending towards a complete rupture. The Bishop did not see much of his suzerain during the latter's visit to Annecy. "I am here close to the Prince, and yet, in a way, at a distance from him, all the more that the press of his affairs . . . hinders me from enjoying the honour of his presence as often as I would perhaps do, were times different; and this quite apart from the warning of the old adage: Episcopum in caulis non in aulis invenire par est (a bishop shall be

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMLXXX, p. 195 *bis*.

† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre CMLXXXIII, p. 195.

found in his fold and not at court). If you come soon enough to find the Prince here, you will see that I do not burn my wings in that candle." This letter was written to the Comte de Tournon.*

Having learnt in August that Louis XIII had convoked the States General for the following October, and that in consequence the states of Burgundy, assembled for the purpose of drawing up its grievances and choosing its deputies, had nominated Mgr. Camus as its representative, the Bishop of Geneva immediately hastened to recommend to his friend the interests of that part of his diocese which lay in France. We have already quoted a paragraph from this letter. In his exhortation to the Bishop of Belley, he says: "You will, I am assured, do all that is possible for the preservation of the rights of God and of his Church. And whilst our Josue is there, we will keep our hands uplifted, and will pray that he may have special assistance from the Holy Spirit; we will invoke our Guardian Angels and the holy bishops who were our predecessors that they may be at hand to help you and give power to your words."†

On September 8, the feast of the Nativity of our Lady, Francis officiated at High Mass in the collegiate church of Notre Dame de Liesse. While he was seated on his throne, a white dove entered the building through an opening in one of the windows, and, after flying about the church for a time, came down towards the Bishop, and settled upon his shoulder, thence to lie for some time undisturbed upon his breast. It seemed to the people that, as on the former occasion, God had chosen by this symbol to denote that his Holy Spirit watched with especial love over the soul of their Bishop and endowed him with graces of sanctity beyond the ordinary. That evening, preaching in the same church, Francis made allusion to the incident of the morning, applying the symbol of the dove to our Lady, to whom the Church refers the words of the Canticle of Canticles: "Open to me, my sister, my dove, my undefiled.... One is my dove, my chosen one"; and he preached with such intense devotion and eloquence that many in the congregation were moved to tears.‡

Ten days after this he blessed the foundation-stone of the new Visitation house, which was laid by the daughter of the Comte de Tournon, as proxy for Princess Margaret of Savoy. It may be noticed here that during this year he was devoting all his leisure time to the composition of his book on the Love of God. In a letter to Mother de Chantal, written about October 7, he says: "I am engaged on the book, which I have had to leave over so much these last few days."§ By November the work was practically finished.

* *Ibid*, Lettre CMLXXXIV, p. 197.
† *Ibid*, Lettre CMXCIV, p. 218.
‡ C. A. de Sales, l. viii^me^, p. 97. Also dep. of Gard, Rendu, and Favre.
§ E. N., Tom. XVI, p. 232.

In the meanwhile war had again broken out, this time between Spain and Charles Emmanuel, who laid claim to the marquisate of Montferrat. On November 6, 1614, Francis wrote to the Duke of Nemours, urging him to return to Annecy, suggesting to him that the loyalty of his subjects called him thither, that the Duke of Savoy desired his presence in the duchy of Genevois, that the fact of his being among them would form an additional menace to the enemy, and that his absence might possibly reflect upon his personal honour. The Bishop speaks with the greatest respect, but at the same time with the utmost frankness. "If Your Grace withdraws his presence during this stormy time, it will, of a surety, seem like an abandonment of both pilot and ship, to the preservation of which every reason, human and divine, obliges Your Grace, and will afford a certain subject of complaint to the family of which you are a branch. And I know not what answer could be given thereto." In a letter to the Comte de Tournon, however, it is seen that the Bishop has no great faith in his powers of persuasion with the Duke of Nemours, and he himself correctly prophesies their failure.*

On November 23 we find Francis at Moutiers in Tarentaise. The Archbishop, Anastasio Germonio, was absent in Madrid as ambassador to that Court on behalf of Charles Emmanuel. His mission was not successful; "I came, I saw, but I did not conquer," he said of himself. Francis went to Moutiers, with the Archbishop's approval, to consecrate the restored church of the Capuchins. He had scarcely returned to Annecy, when he set out upon another journey. This time it was to Sion, in Valais, in order to assist at the consecration of the new prelate recently appointed by the Holy See to that diocese. Francis had been on very friendly terms with the late Bishop, Adrien de Riedmatten, a very zealous ecclesiastic, whose death he greatly lamented. As soon as he heard of the nomination of Hildebrand Jost, he hastened to write to the Bishop-elect a long congratulatory letter, in which, after expressing his regrets at the death of Mgr. Riedmatten, he expressed the consolation given to him by the news that Mgr. Jost was to succeed the deceased prelate, and offered to render every assistance that was in his power. The Bishop-elect invited Francis to assist at his consecration, an invitation which was gladly accepted.

The Saint left Annecy on December 1, 1614, accompanied by his brother Bernard, Noel Roget, Canon Rolland, and Favre, his valet. On the 2nd he was at Polinge, whence he wrote to Mother de Chantal: "I am," he said, "quite cured and well, thanks be to God. This good Swiss gentleman" (a brother of Mgr. Jost) "told me straightway that his brother the Bishop had desired my presence at

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettres MXI and MXII, p. 252 *et seq.*

his consecration not merely for the ceremony, but in order to confer with me about several important matters relating to the complete restoration of our holy religion in that country. And so I go on my way still more joyously to find out if God will make use of me somehow for his glory."* At Evian he was joined by Mgr. Gribaldi, the Archbishop of Vienne, and the two arrived together at Sion, escorted by the Chapter and the notables of the town, who had come to meet them at Conthey. On the occasion of the consecration the Bishop of Geneva, wearing cope and mitre, preached a strong but simple sermon on the dignity of the episcopal character —a sermon which greatly impressed a number of Calvinists, who were present, by the contrast it formed with the affected discourses of their own ministers.

There is an amusing description of the banquet, that followed, in a letter written soon afterwards by Francis to the Marquis de Lans. It would appear that it was the custom of the country to pass round among the guests a huge cup of wine, when drinking a toast. Alluding to this, the Bishop wrote: "For the rest, it is impossible to tell you the number of toasts that were drunk to the health of His Highness, of my Lords the Princes, and of Your Excellency also, last Sunday, at the great banquet, which lasted from one o'clock in the afternoon till half-past seven in the evening: and Your Excellency can imagine that, after the passing of the first hour, the succeeding ones seemed long enough to those who had never before been present at such a function. The good Archbishop of Vienne and myself were exempted from the toasts, except four, to the health of His Highness, of the Princes, of the seven Catholic cantons of Switzerland, and of the Prince Bishop and the lords of the country of Valais; but we responded to them nevertheless in glasses and in a measure dictated by our own wishes. All the other healths were not presented to us, but they found no lack of response elsewhere."†

The first sermon which Francis preached was so highly appreciated that he received further invitations to occupy the pulpit, and he gave a series of conferences upon the marks of the true Church, especially upon the necessity of an uninterrupted succession of pastors and of an authority which instructed both learned and ignorant alike. "By these characters," he said, "even the man of no education can discern the true Church without any doctrinal or theological discussion. The Roman Church is the only Christian society which has a short and easy method of instructing the people in the gospel truths; for the method of discussion and reasoning cannot be suitable for the people or for scarcely anyone

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MXX, p. 272.

† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MXXII, p. 278.

at all, since, as often as not, it throws the learned and the intellectual into excesses and foolish imaginings, such as are worthy of pity alone. The Church, whose doctrine is fashioned for all sorts of minds and is an object of faith and submission rather than of scientific knowledge and discussion, has no other method but that of authority, teaching to all that which must be believed; and there is nothing more in accordance with reason than to believe in God, to believe in the Church, to believe in an authority which is the greatest and most venerable as well as the most venerated by the learned men and highest geniuses of all times."

These principles, placed before the audience with eloquence and force, confirmed the Catholics in their belief, and disturbed not a few of the Calvinists in theirs. The success of the Bishop was made the greater because the things of which he treated were new to these people, for there existed in that country a kind of etiquette or custom which banned from the pulpit any kind of controversy.

Having finished his conferences, Francis left Sion about December 12 and returned to Thonon. It was from this town that he wrote the letter quoted above to the Marquis de Lans, in which, contrary to his usual custom, he deals with politics: it was accompanied by a communication for the Duke about the same matter. "Having spent the last seven or eight days in Valais, I noticed that there was plenty of goodwill with regard to Your Serene Highness' interests among several of that country. But, along with this, I also remarked that the Governor of Milan has been doing much, in order to bring over that State to the Spanish side, and has already succeeded in gaining the goodwill and votes of four divisions (dizaines) . . . who would already have expressed their inclinations by resolutions, if My Lord of Sion and three (other) divisions had not strongly opposed this measure. In spite of their action, it will be difficult to prevent the affair from going farther, unless someone goes amongst them promptly on behalf of Your Highness, with the means necessary to reassure those whose minds have been so strongly stirred. . . ." He ends the letter by drawing attention to the advisability of securing the alliance of this part of Switzerland and by assuring Charles Emmanuel of the new Bishop's excellent disposition towards Savoy and its ruler.*

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MXXI, p. 274.

CHAPTER VII*
(1615)

Francis nominates P. de Quoëx to the Chapter—Letters of protest against the calumniation of his family—He receives great favour from God—Reverence of Louis de Sales for his brother—Spiritual progress of the Saint—Letter on behalf of citizens of Annecy—Trouble with people of Seyssel—Letters about M. des Hayes' son—Francis and Father de la Rivière's praise—The Saint visits Mgr. de Marquemont at Lyons—Returns to Annecy—Letters about the end of the war with Spain—His views on mixed marriages—He goes to Thonon about the Holy House, to which he invites the Barnabites—Plague near Geneva and the fears of the Saint's friends—He supports the silk industry—Visit to Annecy of Mgr. Marquemont—Francis refuses unsuitable candidate at a concursus—Further calumnies against him and his reply—He gives a diocesan legacy to a poor family—Is persecuted by a nobleman—He reconciles two gentlemen—His charity to various people.

IN the month of January, 1615, there occurred another of those incidents which proved that Francis knew how to combine his gentleness with strength of will, when he felt sure that he was in the right. On January 6, he nominated his friend Philippe de Quoëx to a vacant place in the Chapter; whereupon the canons, with every sign and accompaniment of respect, ventured to protest, presumably claiming the right of nomination in this case. The Bishop, however, refused to admit their contention, asserting that during four months in the year he reserved to himself the right of nomination to prebends vacant in his Chapter, and renewing the appointment of M. de Quoëx.†

In February, Francis went to the château of La Thuille, there to pass a fortnight in retreat and in working at his book. He spent the days of the Carnival, according to his wont, at Sales, and then returned to Annecy. Here he found renewed trouble with the Duke of Nemours. On March 7, he wrote to the Comte de Tournon as follows: "My Lord of Nemours has recently sent a gentleman to demand an immediate enquiry against my brother, the Chevalier (Janus), with regard to an impudent calumny, which has been put forward against this last, who is still very ill. Nothing in this matter vexes me so much as the facility with which the Prince accepts

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 4.

† Mugnier, Jan. 6, 1615, quoting Mercier, *Le Chapitre de Genève*, p. 381.

rumours from worthless people, provided it be against those who are dear to me. But the providence of God will draw some good therefrom."*

On March 9 Francis wrote a strong and dignified letter to the Duke in defence of his brothers and of several other people, who had fallen under this unjust accusation. During the course of this letter, he wrote: "My Lord, I humbly beg Your Grace to allow me the discreet liberty which my office gives me with regard to everyone. Popes, kings, and princes are often liable to be deceived by accusations and rumours: they sometimes give decisions which are based upon secret attacks and deceit. For this reason it is that they pass these matters on to their courts, senates, and councils, in order that, both parties being heard, it may be ascertained whether truth or falsehood is on the side of the accusers, whose good qualities avail nothing towards exempting their charges and testimony from a proper examination. For without this the world, which abounds in wrong-dealing, would be altogether robbed of justice. That is why princes cannot dispense themselves from following this method, being obliged thereto under pain of eternal damnation.

"Your Grace has received accusations against these unfortunate people and against my brothers. You have done right to receive them, if you have only received them with your ears: but if you have received them in your heart, you will pardon me if, being not only your very humble and faithful servant, but also your very devoted, though unworthy, pastor, I tell you that you have offended God and are under obligation of repentance, even in the case that the accusations be true. For no word prejudicial to our neighbour should be believed without proof, and it cannot be proved except by trial and the hearing of both sides. Whoever tells you aught else, my Lord, is a traitor to your soul."†

In another letter written on the same date to M. de Foras, the Saint shows how deep is the hurt inflicted by these unfortunate events.

"On returning from Sales, whither I had gone to pass the days of the Carnival, I met with a recrudescence of our already too-ancient troubles, by the calumny spread abroad against my brothers. I would take no notice of it all, were it not that I see Monseigneur to be full of anger and indignation. This I cannot endure—I, who have always held this Prince in the staunchest affection and have so happily been the recipient of his favour in former days. So many people sin, kill, assassinate; and all find refuge in his mercy: my brothers neither bite nor rear, and they are overwhelmed with his severity.

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLI, p. 316.
† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLII, p. 318.

"'What harm has been done either to them or to you?' ask these malicious folk. They take from us the most precious gift we possess—which is the good grace of our princes, and then ask: 'What harm has been done to you?' My very dear brother, is it possible that His Grace has any affection for me, when he takes pleasure in these rumours against my brothers; and, although he has already found out that these are always calumnies, yet continues to receive and believe them, and gives evidence to everybody of his indignation and wrath?

"It is a crime throughout the world to hate one's neighbour: here it is a crime to love him. MM. de Quoëx and Floccard,* people above reproach, have fallen under reproach in the eyes of the higher powers, simply because they love me with the love which is due to all those of my kind. . . . A day will come when to have loved me will not be counted as a reproach against anyone, since none of those who love me specially have merited any blame."†

A short time after these events, as if to give the Saint consolation in the midst of his trials, Almighty God made him the recipient of an extraordinary favour. On the feast of the Annunciation, when he had returned during the evening to his house, after preaching in the collegiate church of our Lady, he knelt down at his *prie-Dieu*, to make a meditation on the mystery of the day, and began to contemplate the greatness of the love which had impelled the Eternal Word to unite himself with human nature. Amazed at the thought of this divine generosity, Francis was pouring forth the affections of his soul in vehement acts and aspirations of love, when suddenly there appeared above him a globe of fire, which, dividing into innumerable tongues of flame, surrounded him with their radiance and, without doing him the slightest injury, seemed to illuminate his countenance with celestial light. At the same time his whole being was filled with such an intense sweetness and ecstasy of love that it almost passed the limits of his physical endurance.

Just as this visible proof of God's love for the Saint passed away, Louis de Sales, who often visited his brother at this hour of the day, came into the room, and, seeing the Bishop's face lit up with an extraordinary ruddiness and his body trembling under the stress of some intense emotion, ran to him in alarm, and asked him if he was ailing in any way. "No," answered the Bishop, "thanks be to God, I am not ill." Louis was not reassured, however, and was on the point of summoning assistance, when Francis hastily intervened.

* In the text he alludes to them as *MM. les Collateraux*.

† E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLIII, p. 320. This letter is said by C. A. de Sales to have been written to Antoine Favre, and several expressions used in it make this seem likely: but later authorities agree that M. de Foras was the person addressed.

"Wait," he said. "Do not call anyone. I will tell you what is the matter, and what has happened to me. But you must promise me to tell it to no one: for it is the secret of God." He then described to his brother the extraordinary favour which had been granted to him. Afterwards Francis made a note of the occasion in a book which he always carried about his person. "*Die vigesima quinta Martis, hodie, servum suum Franciscum misericorditer visitare dignatus est Dominus*—To-day, March 25, the Lord has deigned in his mercy to visit his servant Francis."

Louis de Sales had always loved his brother with a special affection, and the friendship between the two is one of the most beautiful features of the Saint's history. But from this date the Seigneur of La Thuille found a deeper reverence invading his love, and he watched the Bishop's daily life as the life of one possessed by the Holy Spirit. Often he would ask Francis to lend him his writings on the love of God, and taking these, would read them, kneeling, for his daily meditation: and as the days went by, he felt within himself an ever-growing desire to love God with greater ardour and to follow Christ ever more loyally under the guidance of the brother whom he knew to be a saint.

"This visitation of our Lord," says M. Hamon, "had the most important results for the soul of our saintly doctor. It marked in his spiritual life a new phase of fervour and progress, the development of which it is easy to follow in his correspondence. On May 14, 1615, he wrote to St Chantal: 'O how full my heart has been now for some days, of new and intense desires to serve the holy love of God with all the zeal that is in my power.'—'This morning my heart, being somewhat lonely, made an extreme act of resignation (*un exercice de resignation non-pareil*), which I cannot describe in writing, but which I will keep to talk to you about, when God grants me the grace of seeing you again.'*

"At the end of October, he wrote to Mother Favre a letter in which we find the same sentiments on the practice of utter self-abnegation. Finally the whole of this period of intense fervour finds its climax in the celebrated retreat of the month of May, 1616, when the Saint, firmly established in the highest regions of denial and inner crucifixion of self, calls upon St Chantal to follow him thither, and when she, in spite of all her ardent generosity, felt for the moment somewhat aghast at the vision of the sublime heights of renunciation to which she found herself summoned."†

On March 14, 1615, Francis wrote a letter to Cardinal Maurice of Savoy, on behalf of the citizens of Annecy. In order to provide

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettres MLXXIV et MLXXVI, pp. 361 and 363.

† See Tom. XVII, p. 213 *et seq.*, and the answers of St Jane Frances, pp. 408–410.

for the expenses of the war against the Spaniards, the imposition of a tax had been decreed throughout Savoy, and, owing to the general poverty of the district, this levy fell with particular severity upon the people of the Bishop's city. He had already written on the matter to the Duke of Savoy. Now, he appealed to the Cardinal, joining his petitions to those of the syndics, who were sending representatives to Turin. Eventually, the various interests, thus set in motion, were partially successful, and the city was freed from this burden of taxation for the period of five months.*

It was probably about this time that the Bishop was having trouble with the people of Seyssel; these folk, for certain reasons in their past history, were under obligation to pay tithes to the diocesan Chapter, a tax against which they had for some time vigorously rebelled. Things came to such a pass that Francis felt obliged, in defence of the rights of his Church, to write to M. Bénigne Milletot, one of the magistrates of Dijon. "During the whole time that I have exercised my episcopal office, nothing has caused me so much grief as this movement amongst the syndics and some of the inhabitants of Seyssel against their obligations of piety and justice. . . . To the best of my ability I have tried to settle this difference in a friendly manner, but have met with no success, for these good townsfolk will submit neither to judicial decisions nor to arbitration, unless they have their own way. During the course of proceedings, they came to the conclusion that force would avail them more than justice. . . . Unless I am misinformed, they have shown the greatest contempt for their duty towards the magistrates, and a passionate ill-feeling against the parish priests and other ecclesiastics.

"I am, then, worried if this violence is not suppressed, for every day it will grow from bad to worse: but, on the other hand, I am also grieved, if this revolt should draw down upon it punishment, for the mutineers are my diocesans and spiritual children. After considering everything thoroughly, I have come to desire the second of these alternatives; all the more so because, when all is said and done, children are in need of a little punishment when it is a question of correction, and when remonstrance has proved unavailing. It is better that I should weep over their temporal discomfiture than that they should rush headlong into a punishment that is eternal.

"And so, forced by my duty, I send you these two messengers, who have been more than eye-witnesses of the facts, especially M. Roget, a man of matchless virtue and a very capable preacher, against whom they stirred up the women, in order to have him thrown into the Rhone by members of this excitable sex, as if he

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLVI, p. 324.

had spoken against their honour. . . . In fine, it seems to me that this insolence is too public to be disguised, too vexatious to be left unpunished, and too dangerous to remain unrepressed."*

Two of the Saint's letters, belonging to this period, have a pathetic interest in the light of after-events. M. des Hayes, his great friend in Paris, had an only son, Louis, who, after having served as a page at the Court of Louis XIII, was sent to the Barnabite college at Annecy, in order that he might continue his education under the supervision of the Bishop. He was evidently a youth of excellent but unrestrained spirits, and at first took not too kindly to the discipline of the college: eventually he settled down there contentedly. "Our young M. des Hayes is here," writes Francis to Mgr. Fenouillet, "quite at home in the college. He is very charming, quick in mind and temper, and very much in love with the liberty which he learned to enjoy among the pages. We are striving to make him appreciate another and holier liberty, and little by little he is profiting thereby, for he is an excellent youth. Indeed, how could he be otherwise, being the son of such a father and mother?"† In a later letter, written on May 4 to M. des Hayes, the Bishop says: "And now for our son, who of a truth has an excellent disposition and a still better mind; but, as you yourself remark, is a rather dainty and brilliant young person: and for this reason we will strive to keep him well occupied. . . . He is about to learn writing with a very good master whom we have here. The fathers are not yet inclined to set him to work at mathematics for some months, though I had found one of our canons who would very willingly have taught him. On Low Sunday he went up into the pulpit to recite a poem on the resurrection of our Lord. I cannot describe to you the charm and ease and gracefulness of action with which he accomplished his task. . . . For the rest, he has the greatest affection and reverence for me, with an infinite fear of displeasing me, and I think I am managing successfully to nurse this disposition towards me. To hold him in too tightly would do him harm. He is beginning to understand the value of reputation, which will be useful to him, for he is always touched by appeals made to his honour. . . ."‡

It was happy for our Saint that he could not foresee the tragic future. For many years in after-life Louis des Hayes served his country with considerable distinction, and eventually aspired to the French ambassadorship to Sweden: this, however, was refused him by Cardinal Richelieu. Humiliated by this disappointment, he allied himself with the enemies of that prelate, took part in the revolt engineered by the Duke de Montmorency, was arrested and

* E. N., Tom. XVI, Lettre MLXI, p. 333.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MLXIV, p. 340.
‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MLXX, p. 354.

condemned to death. His aged father did all that was possible to obtain mercy from the Cardinal, but the latter was inexorable, and Louis de Hayes was executed at Béziers on October 12, 1632.*

The Lenten Station of 1615 at Annecy was preached by the well-known Father Louis de la Rivière. In his closing sermon, at which Francis was present, he spoke to the people of Annecy for some time in praise of their bishop. That praise was sincere and justifiable, so far as truth was concerned, even though it was delivered in somewhat flowery language, proclaiming Francis to be a saint, comparing him in his wisdom to Solomon, and setting him before the congregation as a model for their imitation. The Bishop, however, was filled with confusion at this language, and could not avoid showing his distress during the rest of the day. At supper, the same evening, Father de la Rivière noticed that his host was manifestly depressed and saddened, and proceeded to enquire after its cause. "I am distressed, father," answered the Saint, "because, after having preached with such good results during the whole of Lent, you have to-day spoiled everything by flattering me and praising me with exaggeration. I am far indeed from being a saint. Alas! if you only knew my misery, you would have spoken very differently. The Holy Spirit gives us an excellent lesson when it commands us never to praise a man until after his death. Wait then, my dear father, till I am dead before you deliver my panegyric." The good religious eventually obeyed this command with a literalness that was not in the Bishop's thoughts, for he was the first to publish a life of Francis de Sales.†

Towards the end of the month of June Francis journeyed to Lyons, in order to visit Mgr. de Marquemont, Archbishop of that diocese. This prelate had for a long time desired the friendship of the Bishop of Geneva, and had expressed his intention of coming to Annecy in order to obtain his desire. Francis, however, considered that it was incumbent upon himself to make the first move in a friendship between the least of the bishops of Savoy and the first of the bishops of France, as he himself described their relative positions. Doubtless, also, he wished to visit the new house which Mother de Chantal was at the time founding in Lyons. Accordingly he set out for that city either on June 25 or 26. As soon as the Archbishop learnt that Francis was drawing near to the city, he drove out in his carriage, accompanied by the most important people of the neighbourhood, to meet the Saint, and received the latter with every sign of respect and affection. This was on June 28. The visit lasted twelve days, during which the Bishop preached in the cathedral on the feast of SS Peter and Paul, had several important

* See note v, p. 340, Tom. XVI of E. N.

† *Année*, April 23, C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 111 of vol. ii.

conferences with the Archbishop about the welfare of the Visitation convent, gave audience to a number of ladies who desired to enter that institution, and found his time so fully occupied that he had not half an hour's leisure during the whole of his visit. Leaving Lyons on July 10, he broke his journey at Saint Prix and Seyssel, to arrive at Annecy on the twelfth.

During the next few days we find several interesting letters from the hand of the Saint. In one of these he describes to Mother de Chantal his return journey to Annecy, and relates how, on his arrival, he found a certain Mme. de Travernay at the point of death: eventually the lady recovered and lived for several years more, her recovery being so wonderful that the doctors attributed it, as a miracle, to the Bishop's prayers. Two other letters, written to the Bishop of Montpellier, allude to the cessation of the war of Montferrat, which came to an end on June 21: the losses had been heavy, partly in the course of fighting, but still more so on account of diseases which continued their course after the signing of peace. "Everyone in this country," he writes, "is resting for a short time, like people who have just come from a great labour. Even so some continue to pass to their final rest in the grave by reason of the extreme hardships they endured in the war, during which it seems they had no time to die; but now at the first movement of relaxation, they pay their debt. Nevertheless these unhappy people find some consolation in the fact that, of those who were their enemies, far greater numbers are dying, as if these had only left the earth of the trenches to fall back into that of the tombs."* According to contemporary history the Spanish army of 40,000 men suffered the loss of no less than 24,000.

There is another letter, written to a parish priest, in which Francis voices his condemnation of mixed marriages. It had been suggested to him that other bishops had permitted these unions. "It is quite useless to quote examples to me, for the bishops who allow them may have more authority than I have: and as they, I am sure, have sufficient grounds to answer for their actions, so will I be able to answer, I hope, for mine. I do not doubt that the marriages of Catholics and heretics are valid, when they take place; but, as to permitting them and blessing them, the Pope himself does not do it. I know that undesirable consequences ensue, but I confine myself to my duty."†

On August 19, 1615, we find Francis at Thonon, whence he went to Evian to dine with Mgr. Gribaldi. That night he slept at the château of his friend, M. de Blonay. On the 20th he passed on to Abondance, where he stayed several days, meeting there M. de

* E. N., Toms, xvi, Lettre MCIII, p. 31.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MXIV, p. 33.

Charmoisy and the General of the Feuillants: after which he returned to Annecy.*

On August 31 he again set out for Thonon where he was to deal with the affairs of the Holy House. This institution, it will be remembered, enclosed three different sets of clergy and religious: the first consisted of a congregation of seven priests, engaged in parochial work and the recitation of the Divine Office; the second was a community of Capuchins, whose duty it was to give missions throughout the country; the third was to be an association of priests devoted to the education of young people. This last work had originally been intended for the Jesuits: the municipal council, however, had obtained from the Senate of Savoy a decree prohibiting them from exercising their ministry outside the town, and the fathers had refused to continue their task under such a restriction. The work was then placed in the hands of laymen, but this proved unsatisfactory, and at last the Council placed the matter before the Bishop in the hopes that he would find a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. Francis, having seen the excellent results obtained by the Barnabite fathers, resolved to summon them to his aid, and with this end in view consulted Dom Juste Guérin. The latter consented to undertake the work on condition that certain rights and benefices were granted to his society. With this understanding, the fathers agreed to carry on the college, to give lessons in the Junior Seminary, to give lectures, if need should arise, on philosophy and theology, to undertake the services in the church of St Augustine, to hear confessions, preach and catechize, wherever these were necessary. This contract having been arranged satisfactorily and signed by both parties, the Bishop sent Dom Guérin himself to Turin to obtain the consent of the civil authorities. The Duke was thoroughly satisfied with the plans proposed, and not only gave his consent, but directed his ambassador in Rome to obtain their ratification by papal bull. The matter was carried through to a successful termination, and in the following spring the Bishop returned to Thonon, in order to place Dom Guérin in possession of the college and of the church of St Augustine.

At this time, the month of September, 1615, the plague was raging in Geneva, and the Saint's proximity to the danger was causing considerable alarm to his friends. At the end of a long letter to his brother, Canon Jean François de Sales, he strives to allay these fears. "Do not be anxious about me," he writes on September 6, "for there is no danger throughout Chablais. Although a girl from Geneva has died at Lully of the plague, which also attacked her mother, the case has been so strictly segregated that it cannot go further: and the same applies to a like accident which happened

* *Journal*, pp. 182–188.

the day before yesterday near Coudrée. Even if the evil should spread, I will do what I can to avoid any danger, with the help of God's grace. But I think it will be well to warn the magistrate of public health before my return, in case he wishes me to stay outside the town in some secluded house for several days—the which I would do willingly and without a murmur, in order to give no cause for alarm and to show the consideration which everyone owes to the preservation of the country's health. I beg you at your earliest convenience to write to Mme. de Chantal, strongly urging her not to be alarmed about all these rumours, which greatly surpass the evil itself, nor to worry about me, who am very careful and am resolved with God's help to avoid the danger."*

On September 7 Francis received a letter from President Favre, informing him of the death of the latter's brother, Jean Favre, vicar general of the diocese. The next day the Bishop wrote to his brother, Jean François. "I have been mourning since yesterday evening," he said, "the loss of our good Vicar, for I received the news in a letter from the First President. The brotherly love in which this poor departed friend held us all, will ever oblige me to cherish and honour his memory and to pray often for his soul, as I have indeed done to-day. For a long time I have foreseen this event because of the scant consideration which he showed for his health. . . . And having for some time debated in my mind whom I should appoint as his successor, I have decided after much thought to call you to this charge: and this motive will be sufficient both for you to accept it, and for everyone to give his approval thereof, that upon this office depends in great part the well-being of the diocese and of my honour, of which our close relationship will urge you to have a greater care and jealousness than any other could possibly feel." After forestalling a possible objection on the part of his brother for a certain technical reason, the Bishop goes on to say: "For the successful undertaking of his office it is sufficient that the Vicar General should be vigilant and zealous in seeing that the other officials carry out their duties efficiently. . . . In the meanwhile, act on my behalf, as if you were already installed in your office."†

On October 2 Francis wrote to the Duke of Savoy a letter which gives evidence of the multiplicity and variety of the interests brought to his notice, and shows how eager he was to turn all things to the good of religion. Whilst the Capuchin fathers were devoting themselves to their work of preaching and conversion amongst the Protestants, one of their lay-brothers, Adrien des Echelles, was striving to devise a scheme by which the converts could regain the

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCXI, p. 51.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCXIII, p. 54.

means of livelihood, often lost by their change of religion. For this purpose he was trying to introduce silk-looms in the neighbourhood of Thonon. This movement appealed to the Bishop of Geneva, and he accordingly wrote to the Duke to obtain the latter's approval for the new industry. "For some time now," he said in his letter, "there has been introduced into this country the art of silk weaving. It is impossible to describe how advantageous the progress of this trade would be in the service of God for the withdrawing of many souls from amongst the heretics, for the weakening of Geneva which supports itself in great part by means of this traffic, and for the welfare of Your Highness' subjects who would gain by this trade what is now gained by our enemies. For these reasons, Monseigneur, I very humbly beg and conjure your goodness and devotion to give powerful aid to this good work so happily begun. . . ."* The Duke found himself so thoroughly in agreement with the views of the Bishop of Geneva that he gave the new industry the greatest encouragement.

Towards the end of the month of October, 1615, Francis was informed that the Archbishop of Lyons was interrupting a course of visitations in order to come to Annecy. On the 30th, therefore, the Bishop, accompanied by a number of the principal people of Annecy, went out beyond the town boundaries to meet Mgr. de Marquemont. The Archbishop was anxious to see the manner in which Francis administered the affairs of the diocese, and on the following day accompanied his host to a *concursus*, which had been summoned in order to find a suitable priest for the parish of Scionzier. Amongst the candidates was a priest of noble family, Pierre François de Rossillon du Châtelard, who came furnished with letters of recommendation from the Duke of Savoy and other influential people: unfortunately for his chances of success, he was utterly wanting in the learning necessary for his state, having "only greeted the art of letters from very far off," as Charles Auguste de Sales remarks in his own inimitable way. The candidate, however, felt quite sure of success, and was indignant at the idea that anyone could possibly be preferred before himself. The Bishop, proceeding with the *concursus* as usual, interrogated the gentleman on one of the Gospels in the Missal: it described the occasion when the sons of Zebedee asked our Lord for the highest places in his future kingdom, and received from their Master the answer: "You know not what you ask." Francis requested the nobleman to translate the passage, but the latter proved himself utterly incapable of construing even such simple Latin as that of the Gospels. In spite of this, and with a lordly disdain for the shouts of laughter that had greeted his amazing exhibition of ignorance, M. de Rossillon continued to demand the

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCXVII, p. 65. Also note ii, p. 38.

benefice as his due. Then the Bishop answered him: "Sir, allow me to explain and adapt to the occasion the words which you fail to understand. *Nescitis quid petatis.* 'You know not what you ask.' I am quite ready to believe that you could take possession of this benefice and increase your income by means of its revenues; but that, with the little learning which you possess, you could aquit yourself worthily of the care of souls, is beyond any possibility of belief on my part. It is not within my power to grant you this office. For I am not the donor of benefices, but simply the dispenser thereof; and that is why I must confer and dispense them amongst the most capable."*

Stung by this refusal, the nobleman lost his temper, and protested that he would appeal to the Duke, who would thus be made aware of the scant respect with which his recommendations were received by the Bishop. "That is enough, Sir," rejoined Francis; "you are giving expression for the moment to your temper: doubtless, on a later occasion, you will see reason."

M. de Rossillon, however, was not content to let the matter rest there. On the next day, which was Sunday, while the Divine Office was being sung, he presented himself in the sanctuary of the cathedral before the episcopal throne, and handed to the Bishop a document which was nothing other than a defamatory libel. After the service was ended, Francis read this composition from beginning to end without showing the slightest sign of vexation. The canons, however, were not minded to overlook the matter with the same leniency, both on account of the nature of the document itself and of the outrageous circumstances under which it had been presented to their beloved Bishop. They promptly instituted proceedings against M. de Rossillon and had almost obtained sentence against him, when Francis intervened, once more on the side of mercy, and persuaded them to go no further. Later on he took his usual revenge, and obtained for his calumniator a very honourable position at the Court of Savoy, such as was suitable for his capabilities and rank. It is pleasant to be able to relate that, unlike some others in similar circumstances, M. de Rossillon was grateful, and became a loyal adherent of the Saint. The latter, however, was not to be outdone in generosity, and even after his death obtained a favour for this gentleman. M. de Rossillon gave testimony in the First Process of Beatification and affirmed that his eyes were cured of a disease on their touching the hand of the dead Saint.

On the feast of All Saints the Archbishop of Lyons pontificated and preached in the cathedral. During the next few days Francis

* I have taken C. A. de S.'s version of the Saint's words, l. viii^me, p. 115 of vol. ii.

introduced Mgr. de Marquemont to a number of the city's institutions, especially those concerned with its ecclesiastical life.

On November 4 he took the Archbishop to the Barnabite college, and the latter also attended a theological session in which a priest defended a dogmatic thesis in the usual form. Two days later, the distinguished guest took his departure, carrying away with him a profound admiration for all that he had seen, but especially for the character and sanctity of Francis de Sales. To everybody he spoke of the Bishop of Geneva as a saint, called him by the name of father, and desired to be known as one of his disciples. Some time afterwards, on receiving a testimonial letter from Francis on behalf of a certain religious, he kissed the signature with every sign of respect. "O great servant of God!" he exclaimed: "a prelate of perfect sanctity, sent to us by almighty God! What heroic acts of charity and justice I have seen him perform! Would to heaven that all the bishops of France had some little fraction of the grace which he possesses in such fulness. He is truly a model pastor, and all of us should strive to copy his virtues in our own lives."*

The visit of the French archbishop had, however, its usual result at the Court of Turin. The enemies of Francis de Sales seized upon it as a pretext for casting doubt upon his loyalty, and suggested to Charles Emmanuel that during its course the two prelates had secretly engineered certain projects favourable to France and prejudicial to Savoy. Once more the Duke lent his ear to these ridiculous accusations and commissioned the Marquis de Lans to make an enquiry into the matter. The Governor found himself obliged, therefore, to send a messenger to the Bishop, informing the latter of the Duke's displeasure and asking for an account of the archbishop's journey and of the interviews between the two prelates. In answer to this demand, Francis, after acknowledging the receipt of the Marquis' letter and calling upon God and the angels to witness to the truth of what he was about to write, replied as follows:

"Soon after the Archbishop of Lyons came into his office he wrote me a letter in which he conjured me to enter into a holy friendship with him, after the manner of the bishops of old, who had but *one heart and one soul* and who, by the interchange of those inspirations which they received from heaven, helped each other to support their burdens; and this especially when they were neighbours. And because I am his senior in orders, he then wrote that he would come and see me, in order to benefit by the experience which I might have acquired in our profession—with many similar expressions of great humility and modesty.

"Since then he has continually desired to pay me this honour.

* Dep. of Rendu.

Esteeming, however, that I ought to forestall him in the matter—since he is the first of the bishops of France and I the last of Savoy—I went to see him at Lyons. He, in his courtesy, desired to return my call on the occasion of a visitation which he was making in his diocese . . . when he found himself at a third of the distance which separates Lyons from this place. I had no certain news of his coming until the very eve of his arrival. . . . Now he by no means came secretly, as do those who deal in odious work, but in the sight and to the knowledge of everybody, bringing with him eight men on horseback, amongst whom were none of any mark, except perhaps M. de Ville, a doctor of theology and a great preacher, and M. Raymond, his own chaplain.

"While he was here, I assure you, we neither made nor discussed any treaty—nor even thought of such—either with regard to the things of the world, which, unless I am mistaken, are equally repellant to both of us, or with regard to ecclesiastical affairs, of which there was none to settle between us: but solely, purely, and simply we talked of our duties in the discharge of our office, of matters of divine worship, and of similar ecclesiastical and spiritual subjects.

"He gave two excellent sermons, one in the cathedral, and the other at the college on St Charles' day, both full of piety and zeal. He said Mass every day in different places. And there was never talk of anything but what was connected with our occupations. Your Excellency will oblige me greatly if you can assure His Highness of this, to the truth of which I engage to him my honour and my reputation, and to God, who knows it, my conscience and the salvation of my soul.

"With your Excellency's permission, I will say in all freedom that I was born, bred, and reared, and am now grown old, in strong loyalty towards our sovereign Prince, to which my profession, apart from that fact and every other human consideration possible, holds me tightly bound. I am essentially Savoyard, both I and all my kin, and I could never be aught else. I do not know therefore how I can possibly give any cause for suspicion, having lived as I have. . . ."* In spite of this letter, the Duke's suspicions were not allayed, and later on, in the month of December, Francis found himself obliged to write two more letters on the same subject, one to the Marquis de Lans and the other to Charles Emmanuel himself.†

During the month of November, 1615, one of the parish priests of the diocese, Nicolas de Fert, of Morzine, died without having made a will. According to the law of those days, his property of

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCXXXII, p. 88. See also C. A. de S., p. 116 *et seq.* of vol. ii.

† See Lettres MCXLI and MCXLII.

every kind passed to the Bishop. It so happened that certain relatives of this ecclesiastic had entertained prospects of receiving his heritage, and, greatly disappointed to find that there was no will, they sought audience of M. Rolland, the Bishop's treasurer. Representing that they were very poor people, they asked M. Rolland to persuade his master to surrender his rights over the property, and made an offer of twenty ducatoons as indemnity. This offer was ridiculous, as the heritage was worth at least ten times that amount, and the treasurer indignantly refused to entertain the idea of such a transaction, at the same time throwing out hints of legal proceedings. Not discouraged, however, in their quest, the good relatives took advantage of M. Rolland's absence one day, and gained an interview with the Bishop. To him they told once more the story of their poverty and renewed their paltry offering of twenty ducatoons: to be quite fair to them, they did not conceal the fact of their discomfiture at the hands of M. Rolland. Francis, with his usual charity and contempt for money, immediately granted their request, accepted their offer of compensation, and gave them a deed under his private seal, relinquishing all claim to the heritage. Needless to say, the twenty ducatoons were promptly distributed among the poor. As soon as M. Rolland heard of this transaction, he immediately made his way to the Bishop's room and protested with considerable warmth against his master's generosity, reminding the latter that such extravagance made it almost impossible to find sufficient funds for the Bishop's own maintenance. Francis, knowing the cause of M. Rolland's vexation, tried to soothe him with good-humoured gentleness. "Come now, my friend," he replied, "if this good priest had not died, should we not have had enough to live on? Do not be vexed, my dear Rolland. I cannot open up the matter again. As to the twenty ducatoons, the poor have got them already." A friend, coming in at this moment and seeing M. Rolland leaving the room in anything but a good temper, asked Francis the cause of the storm. "It is because I have just played a trick upon him," answered the Bishop. "He had hoped to receive a considerable sum from some property that fell to us for want of a will. I took it without letting him know, and distributed it among the poor. God preserve us from any greater harm!"*

An example of the Bishop's patience under persecution was given, probably about this time, by his treatment of a nobleman, who, for some reason or other, had conceived a violent hatred against him. This man, who prided himself on being a wit, first attacked the Saint by spreading in society a bitter satire against him. As this effusion met with scant success amongst its readers, and in no way disturbed the even temper of its object, the nobleman proceeded

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 86 of vol. ii.

to indulge in a cruder form of insult and aggression. Although it was in the depth of winter and the ground was covered with snow, he gathered together a band of retainers and ruffians, who came at nightfall with hunting-horns and dogs to the Bishop's residence. There they occupied themselves with making as much noise as possible, shouting out insults, blowing their horns, letting off pistols, and forcing the hounds to bay and howl, so that sleep was impossible for everyone in the neighbourhood. Moreover, these tactics were continued for several nights in succession. Francis, unable to rest in the midst of this uproar, would rise and spend the time in prayer before the crucifix, praying for his tormentors and often repeating our Lord's own words : *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* The people of the neighbourhood were not so patient, and laid complaints before the judicial authorities of the town : but such was the nobleman's influence that their appeal to law and order had no effect whatever. On learning of this failure, the Bishop's servants could restrain themselves no longer, and were planning to attack the disturbers with armed force, when Francis intervened to stop them. " You must do nothing of the sort," he said to his devoted adherents. " Alas ! they are more to be pitied than we are : for, at any rate, while we are warmly covered and housed, they, poor creatures, must be perishing with cold."—" But they are a lot of scoundrels," came the answer. " Alas ! " said the Bishop, " were it not for the divine grace, we might well be worse than they are. Thanks be to God, I have no desire to emulate them ! "

Emboldened by impunity the attackers then began to throw stones at the windows. When some of these fell close to the Bishop, he remained unmoved, contenting himself with uttering the prayer of St Stephen : *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

In the meanwhile the belligerents changed their method of attack, and proceeded to hurl mud and dirt at the main door of the house, until it was covered with filth.

The Saint's method of putting an end to these persecutions was just such as might be expected of him. One day he happened to meet the nobleman, who was the prime cause of the disturbances. Without waiting for any overtures on the latter's part, Francis greeted him as if he had been his own best friend, embracing him affectionately and speaking to him in the kindest manner. Bitter as was the gentleman's hatred, it was bound to capitulate before such supreme charity : utterly taken aback and shamed, he made a complete surrender, and humbly begged the Bishop's pardon. Touched, moreover, by the power of a religion which could inspire this noble treatment of an enemy, he resolved to reform his whole life, and henceforth became a disciple of the man whom he had hated and insulted. He used afterwards to say that the charity of his bishop

had exercised more power over his soul than the sermons of a hundred preachers.*

"About this same time," says Charles Auguste de Sales, "there took place a great and bitter quarrel between this man's brother (a marquis of quality who also seemed to have taken a vow of hatred against the Blessed Francis) and a very rich and illustrious lord—a quarrel indeed which waxed from day to day by reason of renewed insults, in such a way that, according to public opinion, it could find no settlement but by the sword. The latter had come to Annecy, accompanied by twelve horsemen, with the intention of fighting, but passing along the street of St Clare before the windows of the episcopal palace, was seen and saluted by the man of God, who intimated by signs that he desired to speak with him. At once, while the Bishop was coming down from his room, the noble lord dismounted: but at the very first speech between them he was struck with wonder that the servant of God knew his intention of fighting with the Marquis, the more so that he had mentioned it to no one. The Blessed Francis exhorted them to make peace, and did so well that they accepted him as their arbitrator, and in a few days, through his zeal for the salvation of his neighbour and by means of his charitable labours, these two gentlemen, who had sworn each other's deaths, came to an agreement, and were ever afterwards good friends."†

One of the things that caused much anxiety to Francis was the poverty of some of his clergy. An example of this was found in the case of Jean Neyret, who had been appointed curé of Thonnex, close to the city of Geneva. This good priest, reduced to extreme want by the troubles and wars of the time, was driven well-nigh to desperation by his need of the very means of subsistence, and at last could see no way out of his trouble but a personal appeal to his bishop. At that particular time Francis himself was without funds: this fact, however, was not allowed to prevent him from giving assistance to the poor curé. He went into his chapel, seized upon two silver candelabra, and brought them to M. Neyret, telling him to sell them and in this way provide for his immediate wants. It may be guessed by the reader that M. Rolland was absent at the time of this transaction: on the morrow, however, he noticed the disappearance of the candelabra from the chapel, and, suspecting just what had happened, wanted to buy back these valuable objects. But Francis refused. "No, no," he said, "we could only redeem them with money that might be given to the poor: we will manage to do without them." Moreover, the Bishop was not content with

* Dep. of Dunant. C. A. de Sales gives two stories of such an incident, with two different noblemen. See vol. ii, pp. 124 and 145.

† C. A. de S., l. viii^{me}, p. 125 of vol. ii.

this gift : hearing that the Church of Thonnex was in a deplorable state of dilapidation, he had the choir whitewashed at his own expense, provided it with windows of decorated iron-work, and presented to the church a very fine picture, paying all the expenses of its framing, carriage, and instalment.*

But it was not only to the clergy that Francis gave help. Owing to a series of misfortunes, a well-known lawyer of Annecy suddenly found himself without funds to send to his son, who was studying in Paris. He appealed to the charity of the Bishop, and the latter immediately despatched the sum needed : moreover, as the lawyer could find no means of sending it to Paris, Francis undertook to see that it arrived at its destination, guaranteed to make it good in case of loss, and sent the young man a kind letter, encouraging him to work hard and to keep up the practice of his religion while living in the midst of the great city's temptations. The worthy lawyer was so impressed by this kindness that he felt it incumbent upon him to show his gratitude by frequent visits to the episcopal palace. Unfortunately for the Bishop, the good man's sense of obligation far outran his discretion, and he would sometimes keep his benefactor engaged for long hours with the tedious recitation of all kinds of trifling matters. The Bishop's charity, however, was equal to this trial also, and he never betrayed any want of interest in his grateful client or gave hint that his time might have been much better employed in other occupations.†

In fact, one of the mort wonderful things about the Saint was the whole-hearted way in which he would devote his time, energy, and mind to any one person, who claimed his attention. An example of this was given in the case of a French nobleman from Normandy, who was afflicted with scruples of conscience and doubts against the faith : having searched all Normandy and Paris in vain for someone who could give him relief, he decided to make the journey to Annecy in the hope of seeing Francis. When he arrived at the episcopal palace, the Bishop and his household were at dinner : nevertheless, on hearing that a stranger wished to speak to him, the Saint arose from table, went out to see his visitor, and took him to his own room. Straightway the nobleman began the recitation of his scruples, his difficulties, and his doubts. As soon as one thing was disposed of, he put forward another, and then again another, to all of which Francis gave patient hearing and answer, while hour after hour went by, until the time for supper arrived. Thereupon, one of his household came to tell him that the meal was served : but another hour passed by, and still the Bishop failed to come down to the dining-room. Then a messenger was sent to represent to

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 127 of vol. ii. Dep. of Chambet and Donyer.

† C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, pp. 126–7 of vol. ii.

Francis that, unless he ate his food, he was likely to weaken himself seriously and be overcome by fatigue. "*Is not the life more than the food?*" he answered. "*My meat is to do the will of my Father.* We shall have time for eating and drinking later on. Just now I have another hunger to satisfy, another thirst to quench—the hunger and thirst for a soul's salvation. Let no one come and disturb me again." And so the interview went on, until all the gentleman's troubles were dissipated. Altogether, by the time the latter withdrew, the conference had lasted ten hours. As the visitor left the house, he turned to the gentleman who was showing him the door, and said: "How happy you must be in the possession of such a saintly pastor and skilful director! I was lost indeed, but his good counsel has brought me back to life. Nobody in France could give peace to my soul, and I bless God for bringing me to your holy Bishop. I had heard wonderful things about him: yet what I heard was but the shadow of what I have seen. Between his reputation and his actual personality there is as much difference as lies between a portrait and the man whom it represents."*

* Dep. of Bouvard and Myucet.

CHAPTER VIII*
(1616–1617)

Death of M. de la Fléchère—Various labours—Famine at Annecy—Renewed war with Spain and rebellion of the Duke of Nemours—Annecy threatened—Francis refuses to leave the city—Prince Victor Amadeus visits him—Publication of the "Treatise of the Love of God"—History and description of this work—Francis discusses the reformation of certain religious houses with Prince Victor—His opinion of the Prince—He persuades the clergy to pay the new taxes—Preaches the Advent Station at Grenoble—Francis and Lesdiguières—Visit of the Duke de Montmorency—Francis returns to Annecy—His conversions and his failures—Denis de Granier—Francis returns to Grenoble for Lent—Second conversion of Boucard—Further miracles at Annecy—Death of Bernard de Sales, Baron de Thorens—René de la Valbonne, son of Antoine Favre, is appointed First President of Genevois—Death of Baroness de Thorens—Francis goes to Belley—His letters to Bl. Robert Bellarmine—He helps the Poor Clares—Consecration of new Visitation church—Francis is asked by the Pope for his opinion of Bl. Juvenal Ancina

THE beginning of January, 1616, found Francis very much occupied. In a letter, dated the 4th, Mother de Chantal said: "I see him very little and cannot tell you how long it is since I spoke to him last, so overwhelmed is he with business." To add to his other troubles, sickness and death were playing havoc amongst his friends. On January 18 he learned that Mme. de Charmoisy, the *Philothea* of the *Devout Life*, was dangerously ill at Samoëns, and he immediately made his way to that place, taking with him M. Grandis, the Calvinist physician, in whom he had great confidence. On the 24th he returned to Annecy, but the next day, hearing that Mme. de Charmoisy was much worse, he again set out for Samoëns; the depth of the snow was such, however, as to make it impossible for him to reach his destination, so he returned to Annecy, where he had the consolation of learning that the patient was better. On February 8 he received news that another friend of his, M. de la Fléchère, was dangerously ill at Rumilly: he at once wrote to Mme. de la Fléchère to assure her of his sympathy and prayers. "We will pray for his intention," he told her. "To-morrow I go to Mionnaz, whence

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 5.

I will visit you on my return journey in order to see your patient. . . . I am saying Holy Mass at the Visitation, when I will make a memento for the invalid and pray God to bless him. . . ."* On February 15 Francis went to Sales, to spend the two days of Shrovetide with the family according to his custom. In the meanwhile M. de la Fléchère passed away, in spite of the care devoted to him ; and the Bishop, hearing the news, hastened to send messages of sympathy to the widow. From then onwards, during the whole of this busy period, the Saint wrote many letters to Mme. de la Fléchère, in which he gave her advice and help in the settlement of her temporal affairs and the guidance of her spiritual life at this crisis—a touching example of his self-sacrificing loyalty to his friends in times of sorrow and need. On April 18 he gave another instance of this solicitude, when he went to Rumilly, to console the Comtesse de Tournon on the death of her husband ; he was urged to do this, he says in a letter, both by the relationship which existed between them and by the obligations which he owed to the memory of the dead nobleman.†

During all this period we find many traces in his correspondence of the multiplicity of his labours : letters to Mother de Chantal and her companions about the affairs of the Visitation, to the Duke and Cardinal Maurice of Savoy in favour of the Barnabites at the college of Thonon, to the head of the Capuchins at Chambéry about the founding of a house at La Roche, and to the Duke of Nemours on behalf of a friend, M. de Villette. On February 29 there is a letter to Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, thanking him for the gift of a relic of St Charles, " by means of which," said Francis, " many sick people had obtained relief."‡ In April he went to Thonon for the official installation of the Barnabite fathers in the college of that town, as we learn from a letter to Mother Favre on the 17th of that month.§ About the middle of May he fell ill with a swelling in his throat which at one time was so serious that it threatened his life : happily the trouble seems to have passed away just as quickly as it had developed, and he was able to officiate at the offices of his cathedral on the occasion of Whit-Sunday. Throughout the whole of this time, it may also be mentioned, he was busy with the final arrangements for the publication of his book on the love of God.‖

During this summer a considerable part of Savoy was suffering from famine, there being a great scarcity of corn, due to an unusual drought which had afflicted the country. In some way or other Francis managed to obtain supplies of grain which he distributed

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCLXIII, p. 142.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCXCII, p. 191. ‡ Lettre MCLXXII, p. 156.
§ Lettre MCXCII, p. 191.
‖ For dates, etc., of these paragraphs see *Journal*, p. 190 *et seq.*

twice a week to all who came to him, and this quite apart from his usual daily alms. He took particular care to make enquiries after those of the poor who were ashamed to beg, and arranged that help should be afforded them.

To the horrors of famine succeeded the scourge of civil war. The peace concluded with Spain was speedily broken, as that country was not satisfied with the terms: a new governor, Don Pedro of Toledo, was sent to Milan with the avowed intention of continuing hostilities. It was at this moment that the Duke of Nemours and Genevois decided to rebel against his suzerain in Savoy. During the month of May he had raised in Genevois and Faucigny a body of 800 men, whom he had promised to send into Piedmont as auxiliaries of Charles Emmanuel. These he assembled at Conflans. But for some time he had been holding a grudge against the Duke, mainly because the latter, after preventing his marriage with a princess of the house of Lorraine, had afterwards failed to give him the hand of Princess Catherine of Savoy, which had been promised him by a written and signed contract. Keeping engagements was not a strong point, as we have already seen, with Charles Emmanuel.

Consequently, when Don Pedro made overtures of alliance with Henry of Nemours, the latter allowed himself to be persuaded by the Spanish proposals, which promised him the possession of Savoy under the feudal headship of Philip III. We are told by Mugnier, in his life of Antoine Favre, that the rebel Duke tried to gain over to his side the Bishop of Geneva, Louis and Bernard de Sales, M. de Charmoisy, and other gentlemen of Genevois: in this he was not successful. At any rate he made a definitely threatening move when he ordered his troops to draw back from Conflans and to take up a position in the neighbourhood of Le Plot, between Annecy and La Roche.

On hearing of this, M. de Lans, Governor of Savoy, occupied the suburbs of Annecy, won over to his side the commander of Nemours' troops at Le Plot, and sent Louis de Sales to surround and disarm them, which was successfully accomplished. A month later, Colonel la Grange, another partisan of Nemours, probably ignorant of this last event, came to Annecy at the head of three companies of French auxiliaries: presenting himself at the gate of the Sepulchre, he demanded entrance into the town, and, when this was refused, threatened to take it by assault. This was on July 22, 1616.* The presence of an unexpected enemy at their walls spread consternation among the people of the town. The Bishop, in order to allay their fears, assured them that these military operations would be of short duration. Meanwhile, his friends, anxious for his safety in case of a disaster, were giving him all manner of prudent counsel

* *Histoire du Président Favre*, par Mugnier, chap. xix, p. 400 *et seq.*

for his own guidance in this crisis: they represented to him his peril, if the enemy succeeded in taking the town, the more so because, it appeared, many of the French auxiliaries were Huguenots, who would be likely to attack him rather than any other; they told him that common prudence suggested his gathering together his valuables, in order to put these in a place of safety; and even suggested that he himself should seek a secure refuge outside the town. To these benevolent suggestions Francis replied: "I do not think that the enemy have any greater grudge against me than against the rest of us: and consequently, if they enter, I will endure the outcome of their anger along with my poor people. With the help of God I will continue to perform my duty: when the bell rings for Vespers, I will attend them; if there are despatches to write, I will write them; if the enemy take the town by assault, and intend to do me hurt, here I am in the hands of divine Providence. But none of these things will happen, my dear people, I assure you: these great princes will soon come to an agreement and will answer the call of their blood." As a matter of fact, the Bishop's prophecy was fulfilled. La Grange, finding that the citizens, under Louis de Sales and M. de Monthoux, were prepared to defend the place, and learning that the Governor was advancing with a relieving force, withdrew from the town. An unusual and rather amusing feature of this fiasco was that the besieged made an offer of provisions to the besiegers: this was probably done with an eye to the future, by way of placating Nemours for having preferred the cause of their suzerain to that of their local lord. Anyhow, La Grange refused the offer.*

A short time afterwards the Duke of Savoy sent his son, Victor Amadeus, Prince of Piedmont, to Annecy, to re-establish order in Genevois and to negotiate with the Duke of Nemours. The Prince arrived on August 12, 1616, and went to the Bishop's palace, where he had a long conference with Francis and his two brothers, Louis and Janus, afterwards staying there for the night. The next day he took possession of Henry of Nemours' palace.†

It was in the midst of these political agitations that there finally appeared the *Treatise of the Love of God*, which is the greatest work written by Francis de Sales and the epitome of his mystical teaching. "It is, indeed, the complete revelation of the Saint's mind and heart in the fulness of his genius and sanctity. . . . It differs from the *Introduction to the Devout Life* in this, that, whereas the *Introduction* was written for all Christians who desired to serve God fully in their state of life, whatever it may be, this, his later work, was composed for those chosen souls who were capable of following him

* See C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 128 of vol. ii. Also Mugnier, p. 406.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, p. 268, note ii.

in the contemplation of the ineffable mysteries of God's charity towards the creature and of the generous return which the creature owes to his creator."* He himself admits this fact, though he would have rejected our manner of presenting it, for he says simply in his preface: "I speak here indeed for souls advanced in devotion." Like the great Doctor of the Gentiles he seems in this book to be invested with the mission *to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ* and to teach *the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge*, that his clients *may be filled unto all the fulness of God*.

The preparation of this incomparable work was the favourite occupation of the Saint: its theme was the subject of his life's meditation, and in its composition he found his happiest recreation in the midst of the labours of his apostolate.

Warning must be given that the book's doctrine, trustworthy and illuminating as it is, has not always been appreciated at its true value. Arnauld and other Jansenists, Molinos and the school of Quietism claimed to base their theories on the teaching of the Bishop of Geneva: to do this, they twisted the meaning of his words, and even falsified his text. Fenelon himself, in spite of his veneration for St Francis, was an offender in this matter. On the other hand, it is also evident that Bossuet, who opposed the great Archbishop of Cambrai, had not sufficiently studied the doctrine of our Saint, and, in refuting the errors of Fenelon, unjustly depreciated the teaching of Francis de Sales.

The other writings of the Bishop of Geneva owed their origin either to the exigence of current events or to the demands of his friends. This was not so much the case with the *Treatise of the Love of God*: it was rather "the spontaneous expression of his own heart, the result of his long experience and intimate union with our Lord." In fact, he was engaged upon the composition of this work before ever he began the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Some of his friends did indeed urge him to write on the subject, but of a truth, in spite of his own assertion quoted below, he needed no such encouragement. In February, 1607, he wrote to Mme. de Chantal: "In order that you may know all that I am doing, whenever I can find a quarter of an hour's leisure, I am writing an admirable life of a saint† of whom you have never heard tell, and I beg you, moreover, not to say a word thereof: but it will be a long task such as I might not have undertaken unless some of my most intimate friends had urged me on; you shall see a good deal of it when you come. . . . But, as I have told you, I desire that it should not be known until the work is quite complete, and I am only just beginning it. It is done for my recreation and in order that I, as well as you, may spin my distaff full."

* E. N., Tom. IV, p. 5. † La Sainte Charité.

In the spring of 1609, in a letter to the Archbishop of Vienne, he says: "I am meditating a small book on the *Love of God*, not in order to treat it speculatively, but to demonstrate its practice in the observance of the commandments of the First Table." The next year, February 5, he wrote to Madame de Chantal: "I am about to set my hand to the book on the *Love of God* and I will strive to write as much of it on my heart as I do upon paper."

During the next two years there is no mention of the work in the Saint's correspondence, but it was during this period that the preparations for the founding of the Visitation Order were developing, and his daughters of the new institution became a great factor in the composition of his book. During the conferences which he gave them he was constantly dealing with the very matter of his treatise, thinking it out anew and assimilating it more thoroughly, while they on their part were ever urging him to perpetuate his instructions by enclosing them in his projected work. Mme. de Chantal, moreover, was insistent that he should make time in the midst of his other labours for the completion of this important task, and her influence over him and her continual encouragement had the greatest effect. After this period there are repeated allusions in his letters to the progress of his writing, and in May, 1613, he had so far advanced as to have promised the book to Rigaud, the publisher of Lyons. During the year 1614, Francis, in spite of his other occupations, was enabled to devote himself more thoroughly to his *Treatise*, and at length on November 7, he wrote to Mme. de la Fléchère: "The book on the Love of God is finished." This, however, was not the end of his labour: the work had to be copied out anew, to make it fit for the process of printing, and during this transcription it was to receive many corrections, changes, and additions. The greater part of the manual work was done by Canon Rolland and M. Michel Favre, but the supervision entailed the expenditure of much time and labour by the author himself. Of this period Dom Mackey says: "During the time that the Saint was putting the final touches to his work in a last revision a new fire was enkindled within his heart: whilst his pen was describing the marvellous transports of divine love, he himself was experiencing their reality. When reading his admirable book, he could not keep back the feelings which overflowed from his soul. Tears of intense love rose to his eyes, as he supervised these pages, redolent with the most sacred devotion of his soul. He himself admitted it in later years to St Vincent de Paul, and St Jane Frances de Chantal received similar confidences. During the first months of 1615 her saintly Father speaks of the treatise in these terms: 'I was very grieved this morning to have to quit my task at a moment when there had come to me a certain invasion of the feeling we shall have for the

vision of God in Paradise, for I ought to describe that in our book : but now I have it no longer.' " It was while writing the treatise, indeed, that the Saint was surrounded by supernatural flames, as by the fires of divine love, in the manner already described in these pages.

At the beginning of the year 1616 the revision was not yet completed, but it was close to its term. In March Pierre Rigaud had obtained his *privilège d'imprimer*, and was now only awaiting possession of the manuscript. Finally, about the month of May, M. Michel Favre set out for Lyons with the book in his possession and with orders to remain in that city until the printing was completed. This work was finished by July 31, and the book appeared under the following title :

" Treatise of the Love of God, by Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva. At Lyons, from the press of Pierre Rigaud, rue Merciere, at the corner of the rue Ferrandiere, at the sign of Fortune, M.DC.XVI. With the approbation of the Doctors, and Royal Privilege for ten years."

On the whole, this first edition, in spite of the speed with which it was printed, contains few mistakes. Francis, however, was not altogether satisfied with it, as we see in a letter written to the Duke de Bellegarde on August 15, 1616. " The publisher has allowed several mistakes to slip into this book, and I several imperfections, but, if there happen to be any perfect works in this world, they must not be looked for in my shop."*

It was not long before numerous reprints and re-editions appeared from the press, but it is probable that the first edition is the only one which was published under the supervision of the author. Translations were made in many languages during the next fifty years, notably in Latin, Italian, German, and Polish. The first English translation was written by Miles Car. It was entitled " A Treatise of the Love of God. Written in French by B. Francis de Sales, Bishope and Prince of Geneva. Translated into English by Miles Car, Priest of the English Colledge of Doway. The 18th edition. Doway, Gerald Pinchon, 1630. . . ."† Two modern versions have been published : one at the beginning of the nineteenth century by an Irish lady ; the other in 1884 by Dom Mackey.‡

As to the matter of the treatise, we cannot do better than take the Abbé Hamon's synopsis. " The author begins with a number of preliminary reflections in which he shows that the will governs

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCXXXI, p. 272.

† See Gillow's *Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics*, under *Pinckney*. This translator's name is given as Miles Pinckney, alias Thomas Carre.

‡ Published by Burns and Oates.

all our powers and all our passions ; that the love of God can only dwell in a soul on the condition that it dominates every other love, insisting on *being king or nothing, not able to live except as reigning, nor to reign except as holding sovereign power ;* and that, as God is the infinite goodness, the human heart has a natural inclination to love him above all things, although it can only do this with the help of divine grace.

" After these reflections, which take up the whole of the first book, the author enters upon his subject ; and, becoming the historian of divine love, he describes its birth, its progress, and its decline. The generating principles of this love are the infinite perfections of God considered in themselves, the benefits of his liberality, the chief of which are creation, conservation, and redemption ; the inspirations of grace, which urge us to love, while leaving us liberty to refuse our love ; faith, hope, the memory of our faults and the strong attractiveness of Jesus Christ. Love, formed within the heart by these principles, is always capable of increase by means of good works, however small, and by the action of God ever present within the soul that loves, and it is here that the learned historian of divine love reveals the excellence of the gift of perseverance, the happiness of dying in charity ; after which, following love even into heaven, he shows it beatifying all the saints by the clear vision of God the Father, of the begotten Word, and of the Holy Spirit, the substantial love that unites Father and Son. But, unhappily in this life, love does not always follow this progressive course : man sometimes leaves God to devote himself to creatures ; the objects of sense entice and captivate him ; and where all things ought to carry him towards God, all sometimes serve to turn him therefrom. That is why the historian of divine love describes its lessening and decline, the sad result of our will's inconstancy and of our weakness under trial.

" The five books that follow describe the exercise or practice of this love. The first exercise is that of the love of complacency or that of the love of contrition or condolence : of complacency by which the soul rejoices to see the God it loves so beautiful, so perfect, so lovable ; of condolence, by which it compassionates with the sufferings of Jesus Christ in his passion, and is grieved at the outrage done to God by sin. The second exercise is that of the love of benevolence, which desires that God be known, loved, and served by every creature, which sighs after heaven in order to love him without cease and to see him loved by all, which delights to associate itself with the praises that God gives to himself. Thereupon, the author passes on to the third exercise of love, which is prayer ; he goes through its different degrees, meditation and contemplation, raptures and ecstasies, with the lassitudes and wounds of love ; and

he adds by way of a last exercise the union of our will to that of God by obedience to his commandments, his counsels, his inspirations, and by readiness to accept everything that his good pleasure may decree. Here is seen love at its height, the soul desiring all that God wills it to love and desiring naught else, content to sacrifice itself completely in order that God shall take full possession of its very being and of all its powers. Finally the author in the last three books studies the commandment of divine love, its effects, and its characteristics, and gives advice as to how to make progress therein."

As to the objections raised against the Saint's teaching, mainly during the controversy waged around Quietism, these have long since been proved to have had no real grounds. It is manifest, on the one hand, that the Quietists gave to certain passages an interpretation coloured by their own prejudices, and on the other hand that the opponents of Quietism, in their anxiety to oppose error, were too ready to criticize certain passages without sufficiently studying the object of the Saint in writing them and without a patient comparison of these with the rest of his teaching such as would have shown what his views really were. As a matter of fact, with regard to his doctrine as a whole, he follows the safe guidance of St Thomas Aquinas, with whom he differs on two questions only; and in these two cases he was but following the recognized teaching of authoritative schools of thought on points that are admittedly debatable. For a full discussion of this matter, the student should consult Dom Mackey's Introduction to the *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* in the last edition of the *Œuvres Completes*.

With regard to the style of the *Treatise*, Dom Mackey notes first of all "the assurance—one might almost say the solemnity—with which the author proceeds. It was evident that he was sure of the sources whence he had derived his matter, of the deep and conscientious study which he had devoted to it, and that, above all, he had relied fully upon receiving help from the Spirit of God." The result was that "the Saint was at his ease, so to speak, in the midst of the most difficult and lofty subjects. . . . There is no trace of the slightest hesitancy or uncertainty even when dealing with the most thorny of subjects, and there is a complete absence of vague or doubtful propositions. He teaches as a master and a doctor." Moreover, in spite of the sublimity of his matter, he discusses it with the greatest simplicity of language, and, while his plan was always present in his own mind and could, if need were, be demonstrated, it did not obtrude itself upon the reader. Nor did he intend that his work should be merely a dry and scientific dissertation: he calls to his aid the most beautiful and interesting passages from Scripture, illuminative allegory, apt illustration, and appropriate quotations from poetry. Yet, all the while, he preserves that

simplicity and clearness of language which we have already remarked, and carefully avoids the florid and pretentious style which disfigured so many of the works of the times. What faults are to be found in his writing were due to the prevailing tastes of his readers. On this point Dom Mackey says: "In this he was making concessions to the whims of his epoch rather than following his own convictions. In order to be read, it was then absolutely necessary to make use of a certain amount of literary dressing, so much so that the finest minds of the age were obliged to offer sacrifice to this prejudice. But with these reservations it remains to be said that, granted the conditions in which he lived, our Saint remains a model of simplicity."*

As soon as the Treatise was in the hands of the public, it began to produce a profound impression. The General of the Carthusians, who, on reading the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, had begged him to write no more, lest he ran the risk of not preserving the high standard he had thus set, now sent him a message asking him never to cease writing again in the future. The Sorbonne and the Jesuits declared that, by this last work, the author had placed himself on a level with the great doctors of the Church. Italy, Spain, and Germany all added their tribute of admiring approval. James I of England, who had already praised so highly the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, was still more emphatic in his praises of the Treatise, and is said to have again challenged his own bishops to produce such a book.† The reply of Francis, on hearing of this unexpected commendation, was to repeat once more the desire he had so often expressed—that it were possible for him to go and preach the faith in England and even give up his life in the work of her conversion.

It must be confessed that in these later days the Treatise is not as well known as it deserves to be. M. Hamon asks himself the reason of this fact and gives the following reply: "It is because this treatise presupposes in the reader a knowledge of theology and asceticism which is unfortunately somewhat rare to-day. The author, in his preface, had already foreseen this difficulty, and he admitted that, had he only intended to write for simple souls, curious about the mere practice of perfection, he would have omitted several chapters and even several entire books. But he had not intended thus to restrict the circle of his readers, and his aim was to write for the benefit of that refined and educated society, so keen in the pursuit of theological and ascetical knowledge, such as he had met with in Annecy, Chambéry, Paris, Lyons, and elsewhere. Moreover, this society, fully qualified for such advanced study, had read with the keenest eagerness the great Treatise of the Bishop of Geneva.

* E. N., *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, Introduction, p. lxxx.

† Hamon does not give his authority for this item.

To-day," asserts M. Hamon, of the times in which he wrote, "this class of reader scarcely exists except amongst the clergy and religious communities. Few of the laity are capable of reading and understanding as a whole the *Treatise of the Love of God*." He then goes on to controvert the opposite opinion, held by Dom Mackey. "The learned Benedictine, who has begun the recent edition of the works of Francis de Sales, has striven to show that the treatise of which we are speaking has always been within the comprehension of the majority of souls; that in order to penetrate its meaning there is need only of ordinary knowledge, joined to much fervour and humility. We venture to reply," retorts M. Hamon, in a rather severe and pessimistic mood, "that it is precisely these dispositions which are at the moment somewhat rare: and that is why this book remains sealed for so many of our Catholic contemporaries, who refuse to acquire either ordinary knowledge, fervour, or humility, and thus remain incapable of reading the works of the great ecclesiastical writers, ancient or modern."

"It is the *Treatise of the Love of God*," concludes M. Hamon, "which placed the Bishop of Geneva amongst the most sublime thinkers of Christianity: and particularly was it this learned study which merited his being declared a Doctor of the Church by Leo XIII in the final days of that Pope's glorious pontificate."

At the time of Prince Victor's visit to Annecy the Bishop presented to him a memorandum which dealt with the reform of the monasteries and convents throughout the duchy. During the troubles of the Reformation and the religious wars, and probably even prior to these, a certain number of religious houses had fallen away from their proper observance of rule and were still being conducted under a very lax discipline. Unfortunately, many of these establishments were peopled by professed religious who were of noble family, and who, through their relatives, were able to exercise considerable influence, and as some of these were averse to any change in their manner of life, any attempt at reform on the part of ecclesiastical authority had met with strenuous and successful opposition. The system of commendatory abbots and abbesses, by which certain people held the benefices of a house without any obligation to its rule by vow, was also prejudicial to the welfare of religious order: for the titular abbot or abbess, who really ruled the house and who might desire a better state of affairs, was not possessed of sufficient authority and support to effect a change. In order to remedy these evils, Francis was convinced that application should be made to the highest authority in the Church by the ruling power of the State: and so he suggested that the Prince of Piedmont should, through the ambassador of Savoy in Rome, petition the Holy Father to

appoint a special commission, whose duty it would be to consider the whole problem, and which would be provided with ample powers to carry into effect any proposals resulting from its enquiries and deliberations. Amongst other changes which would be useful, the Bishop specially recommended the following: (1) To free the monasteries completely from commendatory abbots and priors, allowing them, presumably by way of compensation, a fixed revenue to which they would have a right, and the settling of which would stop the scandalous quarrels so often arising from the question of money; in this way complete liberty would be left to the real superiors in the government and reformation of their houses and to the communities in the triennial election of their superiors. (2) To withdraw from the country districts certain small communities and move them into the towns, where, grouped together in greater numbers, they would be the better enabled to observe their rule and to carry out the divine Office and other functions of their life. (3) To eliminate from certain monasteries those religious who were unwilling to submit to reform and to replace them by others of more edifying life. (4) To insist on the observance of the regulations laid down by the Council of Trent, which observance was particularly needed in certain convents of religious women. The Prince was found to be in complete agreement with the Bishop in regard to these suggestions and promised to use all his influence to obtain their realization.*

That Francis had conceived a very high opinion of Prince Victor Amadeus is evident from a letter which he wrote to the Duke de Bellegarde and which we have already quoted in connection with the *Treatise of the Love of God*. "He is the most kind, gracious, and religious Prince that could be met with; a heart full of courage and justice, a mind full of discernment and intelligence, a soul which is given up entirely to goodness and virtue, the love of his people, and above all the fear of God."†

About this time there appears in the pages of the Bishop's correspondence an interesting personage, named M. Delaborde, who seems to have conceived some wonderful plan for the taking of Geneva. In a letter, written later on in our history, President Favre described him to the Prince of Piedmont. "I have been informed by my Lord the Bishop of Geneva . . . that a certain Burgundian gentleman, named Delaborde, who presented himself last year to Your Most Serene Highness at Annecy, and was by you referred to M. de la Thuille, goes prowling about the neighbourhood of that country, having hinted to certain people that he was engaged upon an enterprise against Geneva, where, indeed, he remained for more

* C. A. de S., l. viii^me^, p. 130 *et seq.* of vol. ii.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCXXXI, p. 272.

than a fortnight under pretext of certain business affairs, during which time, it is reported, he measured and mapped out all the moats, bastions, and other fortifications of the town, being, they say, a great and excellent geometrician. But, having found out that he was likely to be discovered, he made his escape a good week ago." As a matter of fact, the Council of Geneva had been collecting information about the gentleman, and had amassed quite a reliable dossier as to his past history, with the result, so their Register informs us, that it had been decided by the civic authorities to intimate to him that "his sojourn in their midst had lasted quite long enough."* Francis wrote to both the Duke and the Prince of Piedmont, referring M. Delaborde to their notice. At the same time he says to the former: "In my opinion this is not the time to engage upon anything in the direction designated by his plans."† The Duke was probably of the same opinion at the moment, having quite enough on his hands with the Spaniards and the Duke of Nemours, without undertaking to materialize the ideas of "the great and excellent geometrician."

During the course of this autumn the Duke of Savoy, hard pressed to find money for the prosecution of the war, asked all the bishops of his duchy to levy on the clergy a tax proportionate to their benefices. For this he had obtained the sanction of the Holy See. Francis was deeply grieved that an extra burden should be placed upon the meagre resources of his clergy; yet, seeing that the order came both from his spiritual and temporal sovereigns, and knowing, moreover, the dire need of his country, he immediately issued a mandate for the collection of the tax. Furthermore, finding that the new levy was the cause of much discontent amongst a number of the clergy, he proceeded to repress this dissatisfaction by means of vigorous exhortation and by the force of his own example. Having assembled the beneficed priests of his diocese, he reminded them that they were bound to obedience in this matter by a twofold loyalty, the one to their country and prince, the other to the Holy See, which had approved of the tax; that, being priests, it behoved them to give the best example to their fellow-citizens; that if, in obedience to the counsels of St Paul, they ought at times to submit to the unjust spoliation of their property, much more were they obliged to sacrifice themselves for the urgent needs of their country and the good of religion. He recalled also the manner in which the Duke of Savoy had supported their cause on many occasions, and had contributed so effectively towards the conversion of the three bailiwicks of Chablais, from which a number of them drew their revenues. "Is not our order," he asked, "the first of

* E. N., Tom. XVII, note ii, p. 274.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettres MCCXXII and MCCXIII, pp. 274–5.

the three orders of which Christian countries are composed? Is there anything more just therefore than to devote our goods as well as our prayers to the defence of our altars, our lives, and our peace, whilst for the same cause the people are generously surrendering their property and the nobility their blood? Remember the wars of the past, and take fear lest your ingratitude and disobedience should involve you once more in a repetition of the ancient disorders and unhappiness." The Bishop, however, knew that example was of much greater avail than exhortation, and he himself subscribed to the war funds a much larger contribution than that proportionate to his income. On October 21, 1616, he was able to assure the Duke that the clergy of his diocese were fully prepared to obey his commands and contribute their share of the new taxes.*

In reading the Saint's biography one does not always get a sufficient idea of the multitude of affairs which constantly engaged his attention and to which he devoted such unremitting diligence. A better idea of his work is obtained by glancing at his letters: even then we do not get a complete picture of his labours, because a great deal of his correspondence has never been recovered. During these months of October and November, 1616, we find letters about the reform of the monasteries, the affairs of the Visitation, the interests of the Poor Clares of Annecy, the personal business of friends like Mme. de la Fléchère, the spiritual direction of his penitents, and the unjust taxation of the monastery of Talloires. Another matter which was receiving his attention at this time was connected with the college of Annecy or Savoy in the city of Grenoble. This college had been founded in Grenoble by a former Bishop of Geneva, Cardinal de Brognay, in the fifteenth century, and by the conditions of its foundation sixteen burses were reserved for students from Savoy. During the course of time these conditions were ignored, and the students from the duchy were deprived of their rights of entry in favour of others. It was to regain the use of these burses that Francis wrote several letters at this time to influential people, such as the Duke of Savoy, urging that the attention of Rome should be called to the matter and the rights of his diocesans vindicated.

Towards the end of the month of November, 1616, the Saint was engaged to go to Grenoble, in order to preach the Advent Station in that city. Just as he was about to mount his horse for this journey, his valet brought him the news that a little girl, the grandchild of one of his friends, Mme. Armand, had been found that morning lying dead in her bed. The Bishop "immediately went back into his house, retired to his Oratory, and made a vow

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCXLVII, p. 295 and note i, p. 296. Also *Esprit*, Part V, Section 12.

that the child should wear for a year the white robe of the Blessed Virgin. He then despatched the same man to Mme. Armand, bidding her place her trust in the Mother of God. When the servant reached his destination, he was amazed to find the little one restored to life: she had told her mother that 'the holy Papa of Geneva' had come to bless her and to cure her; and, as a matter of fact, the girl had shown the first signs of life at the very moment when the Bishop knelt down in his Oratory and lifted his hands in prayer." Francis afterwards foretold that one day Sigismonde Armand would become one of our Lady's daughters, a prophecy which was fulfilled when she entered the Order of the Visitation. Moreover, her mother also became a member of the institution.*

Francis then set out for Grenoble, accompanied by two of the councillors of that city, who had been sent by the civic authorities to escort him. Passing through Chambéry, he called on the Duke of Savoy, who was then in residence.† Arrived at his destination, he at once began the work of the Station, preaching in the church of St Andrew. During this time "he lived like an apostle," says M. Hamon, "and won the hearts of all by his gentleness, courtesy, and example: in order to draw full profit from the respect and confidence shown to him, he spared neither his time nor his strength, and devoted himself completely to the work of arousing the spiritual sense of the town, preaching every day, hearing confessions or giving interviews, visiting religious communities and encouraging them to seek faithfully the perfection of their state of life. As the season of Advent particularly honours the mystery of the Word Incarnate in the womb of Mary he chose the Angelic Salutation as the subject of his sermons, and found in the *Hail Mary* sufficient matter for the whole of his course of preaching."

The famous Marshal de Lesdiguières was commander-in-chief at this time in Dauphiné. Although he had become a Calvinist, and had been a zealous partisan of the Huguenot cause during the religious wars and afterwards, he could not resist a desire to hear the famous preacher whose praise was on everybody's lips. After having listened to the Saint on one occasion, he was so attracted by what he heard that he became one of the most assiduous attendants at the sermons of the Station. Eventually he sought an interview with the Bishop. The Bishop's task, under the circumstances, was a delicate one, for it was well known that the Marshal was engaged in illicit relations with the Marchioness de Treffort, who had left her husband. It was, therefore, rather a matter of persuading M. de Lesdiguières to abandon this unlawful connection than to win him over to the faith, for the one was impossible without the other. Francis was never prone to conceal the truth or tamper with it even in

* *Pouvoir de St François de Sales*, p. 26. † *Journal*, Dec., 1616.

the presence of the great : he had the courage of the saints, which is no servile respecter of persons. Consequently he spoke boldly to the distinguished soldier about the falseness of the latter's position : yet he did it with such tact that he was able to give full expression to the truth without giving unnecessary offence. At the end of the interview he apologized, with his customary humility, for any expressions which might have erred in severity or want of consideration, but the Marshal at once hastened to reassure him : " No, my Lord," was the answer, " you have said nothing that was not right. I will reflect on it and consider everything with all the deliberation which so serious a matter deserves." From that time onwards M. de Lesdiguières cultivated the acquaintance of the Bishop, invited him frequently to dinner, visited him, and on every occasion spoke of him in the highest terms, declaring that he deserved to be loved, esteemed, and admired by everyone.

The result of these incidents is related by Mgr. Camus. The Marshal's conduct became a cause of grave anxiety to the Calvinist ministers, the more so that his example was being followed by a considerable number of Huguenots. " They decided," says the Bishop of Belley, " in one of their consistories to remonstrate with M. de Lesdiguières on the excessive deference which he was paying to the Bishop of Annecy (for they alluded to him thus on account of the place of his residence, whither the bishops of Geneva had retired after the revolt of the city), of his too great privacy and familiarity with the prelate, and on the fact that he attended his sermons to the scandal of the whole Protestant party and the shame of his brothers of the Reformation.

" Upon this resolution the ministers, elders, and certain notabilities of their brotherhood gathered together and came to seek M. de Lesdiguières at his levée. The latter was immediately forewarned of their deliberation, and as he had no mind to be thus lectured, he intimated to them by one of his gentlemen that, if they desired to visit him as friends or to speak to him on some business matter, he would receive them willingly, but that if they thought of presenting him with consistorial or ministerial remonstrances, they might be assured that, having entered by the door, they would make their exit through the window. . . ."

After this the ministers " bethought them of another expedient, which was to have him interviewed by one of the principal lords of the province who was of their same creed : this gentleman, undertaking the commission, seized an opportunity of putting to M. de Lesdiguières in private what the gentlemen of the consistory had not dared for fear of his indignation. The marshal answered : ' Tell those gentlemen that I am old enough to know how to live in the world. I was a Roman Catholic until the age of thirty : I

know how Roman Catholics treat their bishops and how these latter are treated by kings and princes. We live in a country in which they hold a rank different from that of our ministers, who, at the most, are only ranked as curés, since they reject the episcopal dignity, although it is well founded on Scripture, and I think they show no signs of repenting of this.

" 'Tell B. . . . (a minister of low birth who had been the marshal's servant and who had become one of the rulers of the Reformed Church in Grenoble through his former master's influence) that when I see sons and brothers of kings and reigning princes becoming ministers, like I have seen them becoming bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, I will consider what honour I shall pay to ministers.

" 'With regard to M. de Genève, if I was as much M. de Genève as he is, and sovereign prince of that town like him, I would see to it that I was obeyed, and would make people recognize my rank of prince. I know what his rights and titles are better than M. B. . . . or any other of his colleagues and assistants : it is for me to teach them a lesson in the matter and for them to hold their tongues, if they are wise. They are much too small fry and much too young to teach a man of my age and rank how to behave.' "*

From this reply we may at least gather that, whatever may have been the marshal's convictions with regard to Calvinism, he was manifestly an aristocrat to his finger-tips.

Francis was not able at this time to complete the conversion of M. Lesdiguières. This was to be reserved for a later date. The marshal left Grenoble on December 19, in order to assist the Duke of Savoy against the Spaniards. In doing this he gave an example of the independence exercised by the great generals and governors of France—an independence which often irritated Henry IV and which, from this instance, was still much in evidence. For the Spanish party was at the moment in power at Court, and was averse to any action against Spain. Lesdiguières felt himself powerful enough to follow his own policy, to which he was bound by an agreement made at the time of the treaty of Asti. In explaining his conduct by letter to King Louis, he ended with these words : " May Your Majesty pardon me, therefore, if it so please you, for the license I am taking with regard to this journey, the which ought to be agreeable to you, since I undertake it in your service."†

Another interesting person whom the Bishop met during this Station at Grenoble was Henry II, Duke de Montmorency. In a letter to Mgr. Fenouillet, Francis thanks the Bishop of Montpellier for being the cause of the great nobleman's visit. " I thank you very humbly for the honour which I received from M. de Montmorency during his passage through this town, since he told me

* *Esprit*, Part III, Section 45. † E. N., p. 321, note i.

you had inspired him with the desire to do it by the honourable mention which you had several times made of me in his presence. I am still ashamed when I think of the exceeding great favour which this nobleman did me. . . ."* There was then no inkling or prophetic intimation of the tragic fate which was to befall the Duke. Rebelling against Cardinal Richelieu, he was taken prisoner in 1632, and died on the scaffold in Toulouse. His widow took refuge in the Visitation convent of Moulins.

On December 31, Francis returned to Annecy. About this time Father Claude-Nicolas de Quoëx, Prior of Talloires, fell dangerously ill of fever, and seemed to be on the point of death. The Bishop hastened to visit him, and prayed at his bedside for his recovery: the result of this prayer was the granting from heaven of another miracle, for the Prior was immediately restored to health. Some days afterwards Francis effected another remarkable conversion. He was preaching in the church of St Dominic, when he noticed in the congregation the presence of a gentleman who was well known for the sturdiness of his Calvinism: changing the subject which he had chosen, the Bishop preached a sermon demonstrating the truth of the Catholic religion. The nobleman listened eagerly, and, feeling the force of what he heard, decided to abandon his former religion and enter the Catholic—a resolution which he put into effect shortly afterwards.†

However fruitful were the Saint's powers of conversion, he occasionally had to deal with cases which baffled even his wonderful influence. One of these is brought to mind by a letter written on January 5, 1617, to one who holds our interest as being a nephew of Mgr. de Granier, Francis's predecessor. This was Denis de Granier. He had been a canon of the Chapter of Geneva since 1602: in 1609 he gained by competitive examination the parish of St Jeoire, and was ordained priest in 1611. Possessed of a charming and educated mind, he was known, however, to be of a restless disposition, fond of change and adventure, and inclined to brilliancy rather than solidity. For some six years he had failed to attend the Chapter, and the Saint now wrote to him, asking him to resign his place in that body. On the occasion of a visit which Denis de Granier paid to Annecy in the course of his wanderings, the Bishop had remarked with sorrow a distinct change in his disposition towards the Faith: the Canon's belief was wavering, his loyalty to the Holy See was shaken, and his excessive vanity made all attempts at counsel and admonition fruitless. Later on he went to England and there apostatized. This was in 1620: two years later he repented and was received back into the Church. His conversion,

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCLXV, p. 319.

† Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. II, p. 558.

however, was not accompanied by a real change in his dispositions. Returning to France and giving himself up to literature, he became a member of the French Academy, but was struck off the rolls of this institute on the orders of Cardinal Richelieu. This was in consequence of a particularly mean fraud which he perpetrated against the Visitation convent of Paris. His subsequent fate is unknown, for he sank dishonoured into oblivion.*

Another person who was at this time giving Francis a great deal of trouble was a priest named Claude Nicolas de Reydet, Dean of the collegiate church of Sallanches. Instead of leading a priestly life this man had constituted himself a captain of soldiers, affecting thereby to do service to the Duke of Savoy, who seems to have been deceived by him to some extent. He continued his unpriestly conduct long after the Saint's death, for in the account of an episcopal visitation in 1626 he is described as receiving the Bishop of the diocese in lay dress, heavily booted and spurred, whip in hand, followed by several men similarly attired and accompanied by a number of dogs. Towards the end of his life it seems that he made some sort of repentance and submitted to the wishes of his Ordinary. In the meantime he was causing much trouble to the canons of his collegiate church and to Francis. In a letter to these canons the Bishop says that the Dean neither served nor honoured the altar in any way, but as far as lay in his power, despised and disgraced it exceedingly. Later on Francis wrote from Grenoble to Prince Victor, asking the latter to reveal the man in his true light to the Duke of Savoy. But, as described above, the scandal continued for many years.†

At the beginning of February, 1617, Francis went once more to Grenoble, in order to preach the Lenten Station. The experience he had gained during the season of Advent and his knowledge of the city's needs decided him to make his course of sermons frankly controversial. When he went up into the pulpit on Ash Wednesday he began with these words: "I am here in the pulpit of the truth, and I am here for naught but to speak the truth in its entirety: nothing in the world shall hinder me from uttering it. And if indeed I fail to give it to you, I pray God that my tongue be paralysed, that it wither within my mouth, and that I be made dumb." The vehemence with which he spoke these words produced a deep impression, and the sermon that followed was worthy of the occasion. The Saint himself was conscious of this, and his humility was not of the sort that pretends to disguise facts: he attributed his powers and success, however, to the help of God, for whom he was labouring.

* E. N., Tom. XVII, note i, p. 325.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCLXXVIII and note ii, p. 342: also p. 355.

"I began my sermons to-day," he wrote to Mother de Chantal, "as successfully as ever I have done, although about the middle of my discourse I thought I was somewhat husky. My heart has a thousand good desires to serve the divine love faithfully. What need to say more to you, my very dear mother, except that you remain full of joy in this heavenly work to which God has so often and so powerfully called us."*

His reliance upon God, his mistrust of self is evidenced in an eloquent passage uttered the next day in a sermon on the cure of the centurion's servant at Capharnaum. "Behold me," he cried out, "in Capharnaum, which name signifies *the field of penance*. I see those who are paralysed by sin; I see Christ, the physician, full of compassion for sinners; I see the centurion. It is I who am the centurion, or rather the lieutenant of your centurion, that is to say, of your Bishop. And for you and to you, in this field of penance, I cry out: 'Lord, my servants, my people—not mine by authority over them, but by the love I bear them—*lie sick of the palsy* in your house *and are grievously tormented*. But come thou and heal them. Nevertheless thou wilt not heal them, unless I have faith. That faith I have indeed, for we admit that *we are not worthy that thou shouldst enter under the roof* of our hearts; but *only say the word*. Behold I bring you the word of the Lord. But do thou, O Lord, speak and not I. I will speak, then, *now not I, but Christ* will speak *in me*, and as I am not worthy to go to him, I will send to him my friends, the saints, and above all saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ himself.'"†

It was not long before several conversions gave witness to the efficacy of the Saint's preaching. The first of these was Claude Boucard. This unfortunate man, a religious and a priest, who had formerly been a professor of philosophy and theology, had joined the Calvinists, not so much from conviction of mind, but to satisfy his passions. Already, once before, he had returned to the Church and made his abjuration at Thonon, as we have seen in these pages. He had, however, had the misfortune to fall a second time. Tortured by his conscience, he resolved once again to seek readmission to the Church, and, learning that Francis was at Grenoble, came to hear him preach as a preparation for his renewed act of repentance. The Bishop, on receiving news of Boucard's intention, treated him with every compassion and received his second abjuration, which was made in public. As the new penitent was left without resources on account of his conversion, Francis also took measures to obtain for him a means of livelihood. This time Boucard's conversion was permanent, and afterwards, as an expression of his gratitude, he

* E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCLXXIX, p. 343.

† E. N., Tom. VIII, p. 238.

dedicated a book, written and published by him, to the Bishop, whose compassion and understanding had never failed him.

So alarmed were the Protestant ministers of Grenoble at the effects of the Saint's preaching that they held a council together and decided to issue a decree forbidding all Calvinists to attend his sermons. This measure does not seem to have had much result. In fact, one of their companions in the ministry, Barbier by name, having heard some of the Bishop's sermons, was so struck by his defence of the Church and his refutation of Calvinism, that he broke away from the latter and submitted himself to Rome. But the work of Francis was not effective merely on the controversial side, for his words produced a remarkable change of life amongst many of the Catholics. Thus two noblemen, who had presumably been leading careless lives, were so touched by a sermon on the vanity of the world and its pleasures, that they resolved to change their way of living, and ever afterwards showed themselves to be earnest and devout Catholics.

It is astonishing the amount of work which Francis accomplished during these days, preaching daily, hearing confessions, granting interviews, paying necessary visits, and giving spiritual conferences to convents and monasteries. So much was his preaching appreciated that some of his audience, a Dominican and a Franciscan amongst others, went to the pains of writing out his sermons. A well-known and learned theologian, a canon of the Chapter of Grenoble, was so struck by what he heard on one occasion that, coming out of church into the public square, he suddenly stopped and exclaimed to those around him: "What a wonderful man is this! He deals with the loftiest and most difficult subjects in theology, and explains them so clearly that even the weakest of intellects can grasp them!" It was in allusion to this power of the Bishop's that a member of the Sorbonne used to say: "It is no wonder that all our teaching has so little effect; for so frequently we utter things we do not really understand and preach without devotion: but the Bishop of Geneva speaks what he understands, teaches what he practises."*

Moreover God set his seal upon the sanctity of Francis by giving him the power of miraculous curing. Amongst several incidents one is particularly noteworthy and is related by two of his biographers. In some way or other a young lady of quality had fallen under the power of the evil spirit and was possessed. Her father and friends arranged that the Saint should come and visit her, without telling her anything of the matter. At the moment when Francis's visit was due, the lady turned to her people and said: "You want the Bishop of Geneva to come and see me; but he will not come, no, he will not come." As a matter of fact the Saint was prevented by

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 154–5 of vol. ii.

unexpected and urgent business from fulfilling his engagement, and sent a message of apology. The next day, however, he came to the house, had an interview with the young lady, interrogated her at some length, touched her throat, and gave her his blessing. On leaving the house he said: "There is no cause for anxiety; the girl is cured. But you must keep the whole matter quiet, because in a short time from now she will be married." Subsequent events fulfilled the prophecy thus made.*

In the meanwhile the Huguenot ministers were becoming more and more alarmed at the results of the Bishop's preaching: more than one consistory was held to devise measures for counteracting his influence, and a further order was issued forbidding Protestants to attend his sermons. One of the ministers, confident in the power of his own oratorical gifts, arranged to preach a course of sermons at the same hour as those of the Bishop. The result was not encouraging: for very few of his disciples put in an appearance. Vexed at this failure, he spread through the city a report that he would meet Francis de Sales in a public conference. When this rumour was brought to the Bishop's ears, he was delighted, for he had always found such discussions of great advantage to the Catholic cause, because they afforded opportunities of explaining the real doctrine of the Church to those who had hitherto heard only a garbled and prejudiced version from the Protestant pulpit. Consequently he was quite ready to meet the minister in a public debate. Some of his friends, however, were not so pleased at this prospect, for they knew that the minister in question was inclined to indulge in vitriolic abuse, and they feared that the Bishop would be exposed to the risk of insulting language during the dispute. A certain nobleman came to Francis to warn him of this danger. "Well," said the latter, "that is just the sort of thing that will be good for me," and when his friend continued to protest that the Huguenot champion would treat him with scant respect, he again answered: "So much the better; there is nothing I desire so much, for God would know well how to glorify his name even from my confusion." —"But," objected the other, "you would be exposing your episcopal office to the danger of indignity."—"Did not our Lord expose himself to indignity? Was he not covered with reproaches? . . . My friend, I hope that God will give me grace to endure all the insults imaginable, and if we suffer humiliations with courage, God will be all the more exalted and glorified. Innumerable conversions would follow, for it is God's way to build up his honour upon our abasement. Did not the Apostles leave the council full of joy that they had suffered humiliation for Jesus' sake? Have no fear, God

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me, p. 156 of vol. ii. *Pouvoir*, p. 27, quoting Dom Jean de St François.

will help us : those who put their trust in him are not left in need and are *not confounded for ever*."* Unfortunately for the Catholic cause, the projected conference never took place. The minister's companions were not quite so confident in his powers as was he himself : they knew moreover that the Bishop was an exceptional antagonist in such a contest, and they were unwilling to run the risk of a public defeat.

As to the Catholics of Grenoble, the Saint seems to have been greatly impressed by their tendency towards religion, though he found himself obliged to make an exception in the case of the men. " I have never seen people more tractable than these," he wrote to Mother de Chantal, " or more inclined to piety. The ladies here in particular are very devout, for in this place, as everywhere else, men leave to women the care of the household and the practice of religion."†

Having finished his work at Grenoble, Francis left that city at the end of March, and returned to Annecy on April 5, having stopped at Chambéry and at Rumilly. During his absence work had necessarily accumulated, and he was for the time so busy that Mother de Chantal wrote to several of her houses directing the nuns not to give him any occasion for writing except such as was absolutely necessary.

It was probably during the season of Pentecost that Francis cured one of his priests of an attack of madness, which seems to have been the consequence of fever. The unhappy man was so violent and dangerous that his relatives and friends were obliged to keep him bound and chained up in prison. Somehow or other he managed to escape from confinement on several occasions, during the last of which he made his way to Annecy. Here he caused such consternation and terror that the Bishop was forced to order his incarceration in the episcopal prison. A few days afterwards Francis betook himself to the window of the cell in which the priest, M. de la Chenal, was confined, and called him by his name. The patient answered the summons quietly and allowed the Bishop to touch his cheek and to stroke his hair : Francis, in the meanwhile, spoke to him kindly, and then, at the termination of a gentle rebuke, bade him give thanks to God for curing him. In spite of the protests of his household the Saint gave orders for the priest's release and then took him into the house, where he dined with the others at the episcopal table. The cure, thus vouchsafed, was permanent, and M. de la Chenal was able to take up once more the work of his priesthood.‡

* *Esprit*, Part I, Section 27.

† E. N., Tom. XVII, Lettre MCCLXXXVII, p. 356.

‡ C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 163 of vol. ii.

Francis was also the instrument of two other similar cures, in cases which seemed to be diabolic possession, one that of a married woman from Thônes and the other a lady from Auvergne.

A more celebrated case was the cure of a paralysed boy who was brought to the Bishop's house by some poor people of Maurienne. When Francis was told what was desired of him, he protested gently against such confidence in his power. "Alas," he said, "these good folk imagine perhaps that I can perform miracles: and all that I can do for them is to pray to God on their behalf. However, bring them in." He had just concluded his preparation for Mass and was about to go to the altar: telling the people to place the boy upon the credence table, he first of all heard his confession, and then proceeded to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. After Mass he bade them bring the boy again the next morning, and turning towards the patient, said: "As to you, my child, prepare yourself to receive Holy Communion, for I will say Mass once more and will pray to God on your behalf." This was done the second and third day: on the last occasion the Saint, having finished Mass, went towards the boy and, taking him by the shoulders, lifted him up. To the joy of all present, it was immediately evident that God had worked a miracle. The child's limbs were straightened, he was able to stand unsupported and even to walk without the help of others. Eventually, he was taken home on horseback, riding astride, and in full control of his body and limbs.*

In the month of May, 1617, Francis had to endure an unexpected and bitter loss. Bernard de Sales, Baron de Thorens, had been called to the army of Savoy, which state was still at war with the Spanish government of Milan. Before setting out for this military service Bernard made his will at the Bishop's palace: little was it imagined then that this document would soon have to be put into execution, for the war was of a very desultory nature and hostilities do not seem to have been carried out with any great vigour. Unfortunately, however, on arriving at Turin, the Baron was attacked by pestilence, and in a short time was in a critical condition. On May 28, 1617, Francis wrote as follows to one of his intimate friends: "My very dear M. de Blonay, my friend, willingly indeed will I delay my journey (to Chablais) since the Marquis (de Lullin) so desires. As a matter of fact, I was about to write to you or to the Abbot (of Abondance): *Suffer me that I may lament my sorrow a little.* Alas! I am expecting news at any moment now of the death of my brother of Thorens, who left here three weeks ago, and on Trinity Sunday was lying at Turin, given up by the physicians and beyond all hope of escape. Already a rumour has come from Chambéry that he is dead. You can well imagine that I shall need

* C. A. de S., l. ix^{me}, p. 165 of vol. ii.

this next fortnight to console his poor widow and all his relatives here, and to bring a measure of calm to my own heart, which is deeply moved indeed. Nevertheless, I am ever saying from the depths of my heart to God: *I am dumb and I open not my mouth, because thou hast done it.* I adore the decrees of his providence and embrace the cross which it pleases him to offer us. *Yea, Father eternal, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.* I recommend my brother to your prayers and to those of all our friends in general."* Added to this grief was the grief of one of his spiritual daughters, and the letter which he wrote to her finds a special poignancy in the circumstances under which it was written. The nun in question was Mother de Bréchard, Superior of the Visitation at Moulins: to her he says: "My dear daughter, yesterday our mother showed me your last letter with the news of your father's death. Be well assured that I am praying for him, for he was the father of my very dear daughter, who, I assure you, is infinitely dear to me, and in whose sorrows and joys my heart has a loving share. But in this case, apart from our natural feelings, there is reason for a holy consolation, since this good gentleman has departed this life in the fulness of years and, what is most important, in the best of dispositions.

"Therefore, my very dear daughter, find consolation in this thought. On the other hand, do us a similar service by your prayers for my poor beloved brother of Thorens, who, having gone to Piedmont with a regiment of a thousand men, was buried there last Tuesday: this is the news that has just come to me, though I have been expecting it for the last three days, knowing how desperate was his condition. Think, my dear daughter, how deeply this affliction touches me, the more so that my own grief is still further increased by that of his poor young wife and of our mother.† This morning I must go to them and take from them the little shred of hope to which they still clung after the first news of this accident. Yet in all this we have again and again adored the decree of the divine Providence and have placed our hearts in the hands of God in the spirit of submission, repeating: *Yea*, Lord, *for thus hath it seemed good in thy sight.* And indeed we have nothing else to say in all that God does, but *Amen*—so be it!

"The poor boy died on the first day of his arrival in that country, of a pestilential fever, in the bosom of the Church, fortified by the Sacraments received with great piety, under the direction of good Father Juste (Guérin). Alas—he is happy, indeed, it seems to me—but it is none the less impossible for me not to weep over him.

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXIV, p. 13.

† It must be remembered that the Baroness de Thorens was Mother de Chantal's daughter.

You cannot imagine how accomplished he was, how charming he made himself to everyone, how greatly he distinguished himself in the eyes of the Prince last year—and now he is gone! But God is good and does all things in accordance with his goodness. To him be honour, glory, and benediction.

"The poor chevalier (Janus de Sales) is still there, who will have been a witness of this sad death, and perhaps it might be that he also will follow.

"God be blessed in the life and death of his people. Amen.

"Your very affectionate servant,

"FRANCIS,

"*B. of Geneva.*

"This letter, my very dear daughter, has been written in three sections, and I close it to-day, the 29th May, 1617."*

There is a pathetic interest in the simple pride which this great Saint experienced at the thought of the attentions paid to his dying brother by the great people of the Court. The pride was not for himself, but for the one whom he had lost. After mentioning, in a letter to his sister Gasparde, Mme. de Cornillon, the care which had been taken to help Bernard with every spiritual succour, he goes on to say: "As regards his body, he was assisted in such a way that he wanted for nothing. The Prince Cardinal and the Princess (Margaret) sent messengers to enquire after him, and the ladies of the Court sent little dainties to tempt him to eat, and finally, after his death, the Cardinal sent a dozen torches with the armorial bearings of His Highness to honour his burial."†

Probably the most painful task which fell to the Bishop in this sad affair was that of giving the news to Mme. de Thorens and her mother, Mme. de Chantal. On gaining access to his young sister-in-law, he began by reminding her of the compact which she and Bernard de Sales had recently made, by which on the death of one the other was to enter the religious state. Then, in a voice broken by his grief, he told her that the possibility for which they had thus provided had now become an accomplished fact. Mme. de Thorens was quick to grasp his meaning. "Ah, my father, my father," she exclaimed, "I understand you. My husband is dead." On receiving the first shock of the dreadful news, Mme. de Thorens at first lost consciousness, but, coming to herself, she strove to find consolation in the thought of God. "O my God," she exclaimed, "henceforth then I am to belong to you alone." To Mother de Chantal the news came as a terrible blow, and, in spite of her habitual

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXV, p. 14.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXVI, p. 17.

strength of character, it affected her so deeply that she also fainted.* In a short time, however, she recovered, and, together with her daughter, found some measure of strength in the words of consolation which the Bishop uttered and in his exhortation that they should fortify themselves, like strong Christians, with the spirit of resignation to the will of God. In the sequel, nevertheless, Mme. de Thorens found herself overwhelmed with the thought of her loss, and her mind went back continually to her husband: more and more she realized that she was never to see him again, never to hear his voice, never to tell him her little troubles, never to console him in his. Only in the thought of the compact she had made with him and in her strong belief that for those who love God all things, even pain such as hers, were for the ultimate benefit of the soul, did she find strength. "O my Lord," she cried out, "I can now serve you with undivided love. My only tie to the world is the little child you have formed within me. Give him birth and baptism; and then do with mother and child just as you will."

In the meanwhile Francis de Sales, after assisting on June 9 at a requiem offered up for his brother in the church of St Dominic, made his way a fortnight later to La Roche, where he officiated at the patronal feast, and where he was obliged to remain some time by the flooding of the roads. From La Roche he went to Viuz-en-Sallaz, as is evident from letters written on June 29 and 30. Early in July we find him at Thonon. Here, on the 9th, he consecrated the church of the Capuchins, dedicating it to St Francis of Assisi and Blessed Amadeus of Savoy, and also two altars erected in honour of the Immaculate Conception and of St Charles Borromeo. While he was at Thonon he wrote a letter to the Duke of Savoy, pleading that mercy be shown to Jean Georges Crespin, Second President of the Chamber of Finance. This distinguished man, carried away by a fit of jealousy, for which there seems to have been some reason, had murdered his wife and wounded the third party. Francis wrote to the Duke, he said, because of the "duty entailed on those of my position to have compassion on the unfortunate and to console the wretched, especially when they are abandoned by all other help." In the sequel, nothing was done against the prisoner: he obtained

* Thus Hamon. This account of Marie Aimée's manner of receiving the news of her husband's death is very different from that given by Mother de Chaugy, who wrote her life. Her self-control is therein shown to have been very wonderful in one so young, and there is no question of either mother or daughter fainting. Both learn the news from St Francis with terrible sorrow indeed and with many tears, but are absolutely themselves throughout the whole episode. This seems much more probable, especially with regard to St Jane Frances. There is nothing in Charles Auguste's account to support Hamon.

his liberty, and, in remorse for his crime, retired for a time to the Grande Chartreuse. From Thonon the Saint made expeditions to Evian and St Paul, and paid a visit to M. de Blonay. On Sunday, July 23, he consecrated a chapel, built by the Marquis de Lullin, next the Barnabite church. At the end of the month he returned to Annecy, having gone to Gex a second time in order to attend to business matters in that country.

At Annecy he at once resumed his usual labours, assisting at the Office on the feast of St Peter-in-chains, visiting his daughters of the Visitation, and attending to his voluminous correspondence. On August 6 (1617) he wrote to René, the son of Antoine Favre, to congratulate him on being appointed First President of Genevois. "You can imagine," writes the Saint, "how great is my satisfaction at the thought of your coming to this town, to take possession of the office which I have so often desired for you and which has come to you with so much honour. Prosperity is doubly fortunate when it comes to us fortunately, and doubly honourable when it comes to us with honour."* In another letter he writes to Father de Bérulle, inviting him to send some of his priests of the Oratory to take charge of the Holy House. For things had not been running in that establishment as smoothly as he desired: there were continual disagreements between the seculars and regulars who shared the work, and expenses were greater than the finances of the house could afford. "You know, I think," writes the Bishop, "what admiration I have always entertained for your congregation, and from the moment that it pleased God in his goodness to bring it forth, I have always desired to have one of its houses in my diocese." This desire became a fixed idea in the Saint's mind, and he made many efforts to realize it: he was never destined, however, to see it an accomplished fact.

The Bishop was still having difficulties with influential people who desired benefices for their friends and protegés. In a letter, written on August 28 to Mme. de la Fléchère, he says: "I am afraid that that good lady will bear something of a grudge against me, for she takes the greatest interest in the servants of her house, and one of these, having recently presented himself under her recommendation at the *concursus*, was not successful, although he is certainly a very capable man. But at the first opportunity I will tell him that it is impossible for me to gratify him, so long as he is not a priest or not bound by Holy Orders. For what would it look like to give ecclesiastical offices of such importance to one who is not yet a cleric, to the prejudice of several good ecclesiastics who have already been working a long time and have served the Church well? . . . It is extraordinary how fond is the human mind of getting

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXXXIX, p. 58.

its own way, and how everyone seeks his own desire without regard to what is best for the service of God."*

It was soon after this that Francis had to endure another bitter sorrow at the hands of death. The young widow of Bernard de Sales was seized with the pangs of a premature delivery, while staying with her mother at the Visitation. It was impossible even to transport her to the house that had been prepared for the event, and the child was born in the convent. Mother de Chantal, perceiving that the little one had no chance of life, baptized him at once, and he died shortly afterwards. It was soon evident that the Baroness de Thorens was also in a critical condition and her sufferings were intense: her grief at the death of her child was overwhelming, and seemed to take from her all desire of life. As the physicians declared themselves unable to do anything effective, a message was immediately sent to the Bishop. He hastened at once to the sick room. "Father," said Mme. de Thorens, as he came to her help, "death must needs come to each of us some time or other."—"I know that, my dear daughter," he replied; "but tell me, is it to me that you are alluding?"—"Oh no!" she said. "*You* must go on living for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. But I—I am going to die. I have made the sacrifice of my life to God, and I only ask to die in his love." Once, when her agony wrenched a cry of pain from her lips, she exclaimed: "O my God, how I am suffering!" Then, recovering her courage, she added: "But what is all this compared to the sufferings of Jesus on the cross?"—"My child," said the Bishop, "if such was the will of God, would you not be glad to remain in such suffering even to the end of the world?"—"Yes, certainly," answered this young heroine; "both this suffering and any other he should choose to send to me. Am I not his without reserve?" After making this sublime sacrifice she received the last Sacraments at the hands of Francis with the intense devotion of a saint. Then followed the making of her will: to the Bishop of Geneva she left all the property that had come to her through her marriage with Bernard de Sales; and of her own dowry she bequeathed half to the Order of the Visitation and the remainder to her brother and sister. Having thus arranged all her spiritual and temporal affairs, she had a last request to make of the Bishop. "Father," she said, "I have only one desire left, and that is that I may die a religious of the Visitation." Francis at once decided to grant her request, and received her, first as a novice, then as a professed sister, in the presence of the whole community. From then onward, so long as her strength lasted, she gave herself up to prayer and intense aspirations of divine love. She died in the early hours of the next morining, September 7, 1617, in the twentieth year of

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXLIII, p. 63.

her age. In a letter, written to Mme. de Montfort three days later, the Bishop said : " I have never seen death more holy than that of this child, though she only had five hours in which to prepare for it." On September 12 he wrote to Mother Favre, Superior of the convent of Lyons, giving a short account of what had happened : " You can well imagine, my dear daughter, how deeply we have been touched these last few days. It was not the Mme. de Thorens whom you have known, lovable as she was : but a Mme. de Thorens utterly dedicated to God, utterly lifted up by the desire to live for God alone, full of illumination in things spiritual and in the knowledge of God and of herself, and such as gave us reason to believe that in a short time she would have been a perfect replica of her mother (une autre nostre Mere).

" I will say nothing of her very saintly end : the sisters will write to you about it. Amongst those who saw her in her last sickness were some who the next day came and asked me for leave to pray to her, and others who came to renew their good resolutions, moved by the sight of this death, replete with extreme pain, but made beautiful with prayers, such as : ' Blessed be Jesus ! Lord Jesus, draw me to thee. O passion and death of my Jesus, I embrace you, I love you, I adore you, you are my hope. Blessed be Jesus and Mary, whom I love more than my life ' ; and other similar words, uttered with the most wonderful sweetness.

" O my dear daughter, it has done me so much good to repeat to you these four words, which are but a little sample of the piety of her death. This dear soul died both a sister and daughter of the Visitation.

" I am infinitely yours,

" FRANC^S.,

" *B. of Geneva.*"

According to Mgr. Camus, Francis went to Belley immediately after the funeral of his sister-in-law. " After having rendered to her the last sad honours of her funeral," says Mgr. Camus, " he ordered that his horses should be made ready for a journey. His people guessed at first that his intention was to go to the château of Sales . . . but learnt in a short time that he was in reality coming to see me. On this they represented to him that the mother of the dead lady was in the deepest sorrow at her loss, and that she had great need of his consolation. ' You do wrong to my affection,' he answered, ' when you imagine that she is in any deeper sorrow than am I. I know her strength of soul and I know my own weakness : how should I give her consolation, when I am in much greater need of it than she is ? And so, do not blame me if I go to seek it where I believe I shall find it.' " To Belley, therefore, he went, and in the

sympathy of his friend sought strength against the double blow which death had struck at his love.*

His private sorrows, however, had not prevented Francis from attending to the various interests which appealed to his charity. On September 12 he wrote to Blessed Robert Bellarmine, asking the Cardinal's good offices in favour of a convert cleric who was in great financial distress, because a pension, granted by the Pope, was not actually being received by him. "I seize this opportunity," says Francis in the second part of his letter, "to offer you my warmest congratulations on your last two books, by which you have strengthened the minds of the faithful and encouraged them to still better things. But one further word *I will speak to my lord*. How much indeed do I wish, in company with many men of virtue, that we had, if not all, at least one or other of the epistles of St Paul, even the shortest, explained in the threefold sense, alluded to by Your Eminence—the historic, dogmatic, and mystic, as a specimen and type of other similar commentaries to be made in the future. It would suffice if we had the brief epistle to Titus, or even that to Philemon, or some one or other chapter of the rest. For to ask or expect commentaries on all the epistles from the hand of Your Lordship would not be just or right: for one cannot but fear that at such an advanced age, after so many labours endured from your earliest youth for the good of Christianity, so great a work would be beyond, not indeed the vigour of your mind, but the strength of your body. But to open this method to younger disciples, even though they be not yet quite capable of following you in this province, would be a most useful work."†

Other letters at this time were devoted to the work of reformation being carried on at the monastery of Sixt, to the troubles experienced by the Visitation in the building of their new convent, and to the parlous temporal condition of the admirable Poor Clares of Annecy and Evian. These poor ladies, in conformity with their rule, had no possessions beyond the houses which they inhabited, and depended for their means of existence on alms. Owing to the conditions of the times, they were at this moment in the most extreme poverty, which, together with the austerity of their rule, was threatening their health and endangering their very lives. Being under the direction of the Friars Minor, they did not fall actually under the Bishop's jurisdiction, but his charity and compassion recked little of this. "I am not worrying about my authority," he said; "I am only concerned with the guidance and love of souls:

* Gonthier places this visit later, during the early days of October. According to the E. N. he wrote to Mme. de Grandmaison from Belley on Oct. 5. Perhaps he visited Mgr. Camus a second time.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLIV, p. 77.

God grants me the grace to delight in all those who love him." Touched by their poverty, he visited them often, bestowed alms upon them, and even held ordinations in their churches for the sole purpose of obtaining for them the large candles which each candidate has to supply as an offering during the ceremony.

On September 17, 1617, the Bishop wrote two letters to Rome in behalf of these convents, one to His Holiness Pope Paul V, the other to the great Jesuit cardinal, Blessed Robert Bellarmine. The latter is so interesting as to deserve quotation in full.

"We have in this town a convent of Poor Clares, and another at Evian, in which houses the sisters strive to serve Almighty God by fasting, watching, going barefooted, and many other corporal austerities. Up to the present, with the aid of alms begged here and there, they have managed with great difficulty to obtain the bare necessities of life in the midst of numerous and frequent privations. Now, however, the matter has come to such a pass that they can find no way at all of gaining the most necessary means of subsistence, unless the Holy See graciously grants them a dispensation to possess, as a community, funds and other property.

"For, indeed, thirty years of bitter war and the frequent disastrous incursions of heretical troops have so wrought in this diocese of Geneva that sufficient alms cannot be found for the upkeep and sustenance of these convents. Nor need I mention the fact, sufficiently proved by experience, that the system of living by alms in the case of women is always accompanied by distressing solicitude, continual and excessive worries, depression, harmful preoccupation as to the means of obtaining help, and most harassing anxieties.

"Therefore, seeing that this extreme poverty is very injurious to the spiritual life of these nuns, and is such as makes it impossible for them to persevere much longer in their vocation, unless the Holy See provides an opportune remedy, I cannot refrain from taking the matter upon myself, even though the care of these sisters is not my responsibility, but that of the Friars Minor ; and I desire to lend my support to the requests and petitions which they intend to present to His Holiness, and to offer my humble prayers to Your Lordship's generosity, the favour of which I earnestly desire to gain on their behalf.

"I also take this opportunity of informing Your Lordship that in these convents of our province there is a complete failure to observe the excellent decrees of the Council of Trent as to the granting to the nuns of an extraordinary confessor two or three times in the year and as to the examination of candidates which the Bishop ought to hold before profession. Moreover, even when, during the time of a Jubilee, all others can choose any confessor they fancy, so long

as he is approved by the Ordinary, this method of relieving consciences is most wrongfully denied to the nuns. . . ."*

With regard to the last paragraph of the foregoing letter, the annotator of the eighteenth tome of the *Edition Nouvelle* says: "This was not the first attempt of Francis de Sales to obtain liberty of conscience for the Poor Clares. In the spring of 1613 he had despatched to Rome, through the hands of the Nuncio at Turin, a memorandum upon this question; in this document he denounced the confessors and superiors of these monasteries as obstinate opponents to the execution of the Tridentine decrees. As nothing came of this protest, the Saint, not content with seeking the intervention of Cardinal Bellarmine, sent another petition to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. This was doubtless contemporaneous with the letter in question. It was presented by a son of the Franciscan Order, Father Dominic of Chambéry. This time, by order of the Pope, the Bishop of Geneva was commanded to insist that superiors should provide an extraordinary confessor, and, in case of refusal, to send one himself. In spite of everything, the nuns were not fully free to follow the prescriptions of the Church in this matter until by virtue of an apostolic brief they freed themselves from the jurisdiction of the Friars Minor and passed under that of the Ordinary. This took place during the episcopate of Jean François de Sales."†

There is another interesting letter of the Saint's at this period, addressed to Dom Jerome Boeiro, the General of the Barnabites, about Father Redento Baranzano, who had been teaching with great success at the college of Annecy and who had recently received word of his recall to Milan. It appears that the reason of this recall was his publication of a book without the licence of his superiors. This was the compendium of his lessons, entitled *Uranoscopia*, already alluded to: in it the planetary system of Copernicus was discussed and developed, as well as Galileo's ideas on the same subject. We are told, it may be mentioned, that the young author was acquainted in one way or another with Bacon, Kepler, and Galileo himself. The recent decree of the Congregation of the Index, so famous in history, made the publication of *Uranoscopia* a delicate matter, and his superiors took a severe view of his action in bringing it out without the proper permission. Let it be said here that the author, in a later work, made a public acknowledgement of his fault. At the moment, however, Francis was anxious that the college of Annecy should not lose the services of one who was a brilliant professor and to whose excellent character he himself could testify. Accordingly he wrote on September 23, 1617, to the General:

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLIX, p. 91.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, p. 93, note i.

"Dom Redento is returning whither holy obedience summons him. He has most excellent qualities and has given great edification to all. I know that he has done wrong in publishing his books without the requisite authorization, but I also know that the principal cause of this fault is a certain simplicity and inadvertence on his part, and that, with the help of Your Reverence's paternal and kind correction, he will be more careful in the future. Therefore, unless you consider it inadvisable for reasons unknown to me, I venture to suggest to Your Reverence that it would be a good thing to send him back here : for, having learnt the language and being very much liked in these parts, it seems to me he would be capable of much good work here. Nevertheless, I submit myself in all this to the decision of your own great prudence."*

The Saint's request was granted and Dom Redento returned to Annecy in October.

At this time Francis was still in doubt as to his destination for the coming Advent Station. In a letter, written to Dom Juste Guérin on September 23, 1617, he says : "I beg you to do me the favour to enquire of the Prince Cardinal whether I am to go to Grenoble or to Paris this next Advent and Lent, for His Highness the Duke has promised the Marshal (Lesdiguières) that I shall go to Grenoble, and to others that I shall go to Paris, and I do not know to which of the two he desires me to engage myself. Now it is high time that I should know, so that I may settle the matter in accordance with his wishes."†

On September 30 the Bishop had the great happiness of consecrating the newly erected church of the Visitation. Although nearly all the authors have placed this event in 1618, it is quite evident from the letters of St Jane Frances that it took place at this time.‡

By the middle of October we find it settled that Francis is to go to Grenoble for both Advent and Lent. In the letter giving us this information, the Saint also tells Mgr. Fenouillet that the war with Spain was ended, but that they were not yet experiencing the effects of peace, because there was some difficulty in the execution of the treaty, signed at Pavia on October 9, 1617.§

There are so many references to the Barnabite fathers in these pages that it will interest the reader to have the Saint's considered verdict upon them and their work. In a letter written on November 6, 1617, he says : "Let me say a word about our Barnabites. . . . They are people of very real piety, incomparably gentle and courteous, who work ceaselessly for the conversion of their fellows ; in

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLX, p. 94.
† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLXI, p. 97.
‡ *Journal*, Sept. 30, 1917, p. 219.
§ E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCXVI, p. 105.

which task they show themselves both skilful and untiring. One thing only is wanting in them, a thing we easily put up with here : it is that, though they have a number of excellent preachers, we cannot at present profit by this talent of theirs, because they have not yet acquired perfect familiarity with the French language, but only enough to make themselves understood in catechetical lessons, little exhortations, and spiritual conversations : but they are rapidly making progress every day. Unfortunately a great calamity has come to them just recently in their loss by death of a Parisian father.* For myself, I think that they will some day do a great work in France ; for they not only work most effectively at the education of the young (which is not so much needed, seeing the excellent work done by the Jesuit fathers in this department), but they sing in choir, hear confessions, give catechism in any villages to which they are sent, preach, and, in fine, do everything that can be desired ; moreover, they do all this most willingly and ask very little for their upkeep. This is what I know about them and which makes me very desirous to see them brought in wherever the Jesuit fathers are not yet working."†

For some time prior to these events proceedings were being taken to obtain the beatification of Juvenal Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, and Francis had recently received a brief from Pope Paul V, commissioning him to give his opinion to the Holy See on one whom he had known personally. In obedience to this command Francis wrote to His Holiness a lengthy document, of which the following are the salient passages :

" It has been the greatest joy to me to learn that proposals are on foot to make known to all men the life and virtue of the most illustrious and most reverend father and Lord, Juvenal Ancina : for, as that great bishop, St Gregory Nazianzen says, since bishops are the painters of virtue and consequently ought to depict so excellent a subject in the most perfect and exact manner possible both by word and work, I have no doubt but that in the life of our excellent and admirable Juvenal we shall find the complete and perfect image of Christian virtue, that is to say, of all the virtues.

" And truly, during the space of those four or five months, during which I was engaged in Rome with the affairs of this bishopric by order of my devout and virtuous predecessor, Claude de Granier, I indeed made the acquaintance of a number of men distinguished for holiness and learning, who by their labours enlightened both the capital of the world and the world itself ; but amongst all these

* This was Father Guillaume Cramoisy, who owed his call to the religious life of Bl. Juvenal Ancina. St Francis visited him in his last illness, and after his death said Mass for him in the College chapel.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLXXI, p. 112.

great men the virtues of this one man arrested the attention of my mind in a special and eminent manner. For I admired in him not only a great learning and knowledge in many divine subjects, but a great contempt of self; not only a great dignity of life and manners, but a charming affability and modesty of bearing; not only a great strictness as regards himself in all matters of virtue, but a great civility and gentleness towards others. And all this was the more remarkable, because he did not conceal one kind of ostentation by the display of another, but by a real humility . . . a man, indeed, beloved of God and man, who loved God and man with the purest spirit of love. . . . I used to notice that, on suitable occasions, he would praise the institutions, methods, teachings, and labours in God's service of other religious, ecclesiastics, and laymen, as fully, as sincerely, and as affectionately as if he himself belonged to their congregation or society; and, while he held his beloved Congregation of the Oratory in a most intense, filial, and wholehearted affection, he had no less love or esteem or praise (as happens in some cases) for other convents and congregations of God's servants. For this reason it was that whenever anyone, touched by divine love and anxious to follow a higher manner of life, took counsel of his prudence, he would persuade his enquirer affectionately, according to his light, to enter that society which he considered most suitable in the particular circumstances of the case: that is to say, that he was a man who was neither of Paul or Cephas or Apollo, but of Jesus Christ, a man who never listened to those icy words *mine* and *thine* whether in things spiritual or temporal, but who sincerely weighed and considered all things in Jesus Christ and for the sake of Jesus Christ."

As an illustration of this disinterestedness, Francis then relates how Father Juvenal Ancina lifted the soul of Guillaume Cramoisy to the higher life and guided him into the Barnabite Order.

"As to that which concerns myself," continues Francis, "I confess openly that by several letters which I received from him, thanks to the friendship he bore me, I have been greatly encouraged and helped towards the love of Christian virtue.

"From the moment that he was transferred from his excellent life as an Oratorian to the sacred episcopal office, his virtues began to shine with still greater splendour and clearness, as indeed was to be expected. . . . And in truth . . . when I went to Carmagnola . . . I saw and felt vividly how much his piety and great virtue had aroused in his people an immense veneration and love. . . .

"In fine, to resume all in one word, I do not remember ever to have seen a man more fully and splendidly gifted with those

qualities which the Apostle desired so much in all apostolic men."*

It cannot but strike one, when reading this panegyric of Bl. Juvenal Ancina, that Francis, in describing so feelingly the virtues of his friend, was all unconsciously painting a picture of himself.

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me, p. 167 of vol. ii.

CHAPTER IX*
(1617–1618)

Francis goes to Grenoble for his second Advent Station—St Jane Frances ill at Annecy—Francis writes letters about true austerity and against criticisms of the Visitation—Returns to Annecy—Various letters—The Carmelites and Gex—Death of Dom S. Fregose and M. Philippe de Quoëx—The Saint saves a dying man from despair —Returns to Grenoble for his second Lenten Station—His love for the Minims—Letter on the recitation of the Office for nuns—Founding of the Visitation at Grenoble—Francis intercedes for Father Calcagni—On his way home he visits Dom Bruno d'Affringues at the Grande Chartreuse—Also President Favre at Chambéry —Various letters—Trouble with the Dominicans and Barnabites about the Visitation garden—President Favre visits Annecy—The Lawyer, Pellet, tries to murder the Saint—End of the Spanish war —Francis sits for his portrait—Visits Talloires—Writes to Father Lessius—Continues the work of reform at Sixt—Miracle of the multiplication of food—He prepares for his journey to France in the suite of the Cardinal Prince of Savoy—Invited to write the life of Bl. Juvenal Ancina, he declines.

AS we have seen in the last chapter, it had been decided that Francis de Sales should preach the Advent Station of that year at Grenoble. It was now time for him to set out on his journey, in order to fulfil his engagement. Before departing, however, he decided to draw up his last will and testament : in this document he left whatever property he possessed in equal shares to Jean François and Louis, his brothers, and to the sons of Gallois, his other brother, who had died three years before. Then, on the same date, November 29, he set out for Grenoble.

He was leaving Annecy on this occasion with great reluctance, for the health of Mother de Chantal was at that time giving the greatest anxiety to all her friends. The death of her daughter, the young Baroness de Thorens, had struck a cruel blow at the mother's heart, and although she bore her grief with the steadfast fortitude of a saint, the sorrow she endured and perhaps the very struggle she made against its influence, seriously undermined her health. A quartian fever attacked her during the month of October, and by the end of the following month she was in a critical condition. Her

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 6.

symptoms showed a slight amelioration at the moment of the Bishop's departure, but during his journey and the first days of his stay at Grenoble he was necessarily left in a state of great anxiety. In a letter to Mother Favre, of the Visitation convent in Lyons, he says: "What shall I say to you, my very dear daughter? For myself, I am well enough indeed, but remain in great anxiety about our mother, whom I left somewhat better than she had been ten or twelve days ago, but nevertheless still in danger. And you can imagine that, having had no news of any sort since the vigil of St Andrew, I cannot help but feel anxious. May the will of God be ever the sole refuge of ours, and its fulfilment our consolation."*

In a few days, however, the Bishop received news that Mother de Chantal had taken a decided turn for the better, and was on the way to convalescence. We are told that on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, he made his way after his sermon to the church of the Recollects and there said Mass with such great devotion that the good fathers thought that he was in an ecstasy. A letter which he wrote to the invalid on that same day gives us a picture of the joy and gratitude with which his heart was filled.

"In the name of the most Holy Trinity, just three words to my very dear mother. I went into the pulpit as happy as a little bird, and there I sang more joyously than usual in honour of the great God *who has redeemed my life from destruction and who will crown me with mercy and compassion.* Yes, my daughter, for St Paul aptly called his children *my joy and my crown:* a joy and a crown composed of the divine mercies. Let us give ourselves over to God; let us bless his holy name and erect the throne of his sacred love in our souls: and so they will live for ever and ever.

"May God then be for ever blessed, *who consoles us in all our tribulations.* May God be for ever blessed, and deign more and more to strengthen the hope which he gives us of the cure of my well-beloved mother and daughter. May God be blessed, and give me the grace to be of some service here and anywhere that he chooses to call me, but especially in my diocese, since he has chosen to entrust it to me, and towards which, wherever I may be, my heart turns at every moment.

"May the glorious Virgin be for ever honoured who is our Lady and Queen of *fair love.* To-day is her first feast, which is memorable for me,† and I have just come from the church of the Recollect fathers, which is dedicated to the mystery now being celebrated.

"O God, Saviour of our souls, who art the splendour of the eternal light, grant this day and ten thousand others afterwards, full of goodness, service, holiness, and happiness, to the well-beloved

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCLXXVI, p. 124.

† The day of his consecration.

daughter whom it has pleased thee to give me and to make precious to my heart as my very self."*

Greatly encouraged by the good news from Annecy, Francis gave himself up to the work of preaching with renewed zest. There were not wanting even Catholics who considered that in occupying the pulpit so soon after his former visits to the city, he was not displaying his usual prudence. It was a Catholic who asserted of him that "he was very rash in undertaking to preach two consecutive years in the same town and in the presence of a celebrated parliament, and that the heretics would rejoice thereat, hoping that by his repetitions he would display his ignorance. To this the humble prelate replied: 'If I was intending to preach of myself, I might have reason to be afraid; but as I only desire to preach Jesus Christ and his glory, I hope to prove that God is a subject that can can never be exhausted.'"† As to the Calvinists, their hopes and procedure on this occasion are described by Charles Auguste de Sales in the vigorous and uncompromising language which he always employed when dealing with the opponents of his faith. He remarks that the Bishop's preaching was not a matter of rejoicing for the ministers, who knew very well that he only came to the city for their discomfiture. "Now they went very often," he continues, "to listen to his preaching, in imitation of the Scribes and Pharisees, in order to catch him in his speech, since they had been unable to remark the slightest atom of imperfection in his life or convince him of sin. At the beginning they said: 'Let us go and hear if he has anything new to tell us. It is scarcely possible that he can avoid repeating sometimes the same things that he said last year.' But Francis showed them that he was very different from themselves, who were always a failure in the end and in time of need: he preached more learnedly and more powerfully than ever. This drew down upon him such hatred and envy from these wretches and agents of Satan, that heresy, having no longer any means of resisting the weight of his arguments, armed this ignorant and foolish populace with insults and gibes against the saintly prelate. He on his part, taking no notice of the baying of these dogs against the moon, saw them thus miserably dying with rage, and in the meanwhile continued ever to gather an excellent harvest into the barns of the Church."‡

Busied as he was with the work of preaching and hearing confessions, the Bishop still managed to find time for his correspondence. Two letters of this period are interesting as emphasizing once more the spirit of the Visitation Order and defending its constitution

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCLXXVII, p. 126.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, note iii, p. 124.

‡ C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 172 of vol. ii.

against the attacks of well-meaning critics. The first was addressed to a novice. This lady, Mlle. de Gérard, had been very much given to certain penitential austerities while she was still in the world: "After her admission to the noviciate this tendency of hers became a veritable temptation. 'She had difficulty at first,' relates the *History of the Foundation of the Visitation in Grenoble*, 'in understanding the perfection hidden beneath the apparent mildness of our manner of life: she wrote about her difficulty to her holy director, who at the time was absent, and he made the following reply.'*

"I have seen the suggestions which the enemy of your spiritual progress is making to your heart, my very dear daughter, and see moreover the grace which the Holy Spirit of God is giving you to keep you strong and consistent in following the path upon which he has placed you. My very dear daughter, that evil one does not mind if people punish their bodies, provided that they follow their own particular wills: he does not fear austerity, but obedience. What better austerity can there be than to keep the will in subjection and continually obedient?

"Keep your heart in peace. You are enamoured of these voluntary penances, if indeed penances they can be called which are the works of self-love. When you took the habit, after many prayers and much thought, it was found good that you should enter the school of obedience and abnegation of your own will, rather than remain abandoned to your own judgement and to yourself. Do not therefore let yourself be shaken, but remain where our Lord has placed you. It is true that you find therein great mortifications of heart, seeing yourself so imperfect in this way and often worthy of correction and rebuke: but is not that the very thing which you must seek—mortification of heart and the continual knowledge of your own insufficiency?

"But, you say, you cannot do such and such a penance which you desire. Now tell me, dear daughter, what better penance can be undergone by a heart that has committed a fault than to submit to the continual crucifixion and surrender of its own self-love?

"But I am saying more than is needed. God himself will support you with the same merciful hand which placed you in this vocation, and the enemy will gain no victory over you, who, as the first daughter of that country, must be well tested by temptation and well crowned by perseverance."†

The second letter was written to Mother Favre, Superior of the Visitation of Lyons. Several criticisms seem to have been made against the institutions under which the nuns lived: to wit, that

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, note i, p. 130.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCLXXX, p. 131.

they only took simple vows, that such vows were no bar to a legal marriage, that they could be easily dispensed by ecclesiastical authority ; in fine, that these vows were not of sufficient binding force. There were also complaints about the expulsion of members of the Institute under certain conditions and the prolongation of the noviciate. In this letter Francis answers all such objections in detail and in general.

" Your vows, my very dear daughter, are as strong as the vows of any religious order in obliging the consciences of the sisters to their observance. It is true, nevertheless, that a woman who wills to lose her soul and her honour can marry after taking the vows, as might do the most strictly professed nun in France, if she choose to lose her soul and avail herself of the Edict of pacification (Edict of Nantes). The formulary of your vows is composed on the model of those of similar congregations in Italy, and expresses much more fully the force of the obligation than do the majority of the formularies of St Benedict's rule. The vow of chastity is fundamental, according to the ancient fathers, in convents of women, and the others are none the less essential.

" It is true, one can be dispensed from simple vows and from the others also ; from the former, nevertheless, more easily than the latter, but not without grave reason and only when it is expedient : with which the Jesuit fathers manage extremely well, partly maintaining the high standard of their very illustrious Company by this means, which the world does not commend, but which is certainly approved of by God and the Church. And all the religious orders of antiquity have been like that, the solemnity of vows having been established only a few hundred years.

" Expulsion has always been in use among the ancient orders. It is a matter of strict usage that for not being willing to observe the rule of silence a sister should be expelled : it would be done, not for the infringement of silence, but for obstinately persisting in disturbing and upsetting the good order of the congregation and for showing contempt for the Holy Ghost, who has commanded silence within religious houses. And if people are not expelled for obstinate disobedience and the deliberate contempt of order, I do not know any reason at all for expulsion. In fine, religious Orders, even those taking the most solemn vows, make use of it : at least one has seen religious expelled from the Order of St Francis, even from the Capuchins ; and the Jesuit fathers, who are so circumspect and prudent, expel for disobediences, however slightly systematic and continued these may be.

" The prolongation of the noviciate, when ordered for good reason, is not contrary to the Council (of Trent), as has been declared by those who are charged to interpret its decrees, and

theologians have expressed the same opinion. As a matter of fact, the Carmelites do this, according as they see fit."

Francis ends with an allusion to his critics, who were probably members of the clergy of Lyons. "If these good gentlemen," he says, "had studied and thought for the purpose of blaming as much as we have done for the purpose of establishing, we would not find so many objections. God be praised! I hope that soon everyone will be satisfied by the final decision which will be given to the matter in Rome."*

In a postscript the Saint adds: "If those who make this objection are men of study, they can read Leonard Lessius, the Jesuit, where they will find what they need."

On his return to Annecy at the end of December, 1617, Francis plunged once more into the work of his diocese, officiating in his Cathedral and other churches, holding ordinations, establishing parishes and schools, and, amongst other things, assisting at the official installation of René Favre as President of the Council of Genevois. During the first days of January, 1618, he wrote a long letter to M. Bénigne Milletot, an old friend, who seems to have asked him for a reassurance of the affection that had existed for so long between them. In this letter there are several passages that are typical of the writer. After assuring M. Milletot that there was no diminution or alteration in his friendship, he continues: "You know well, I am sure, that I am incapable of any such changes, the more so that my affection has as its object one who is so unchangeably lovable as yourself, my very dear brother. But I see there is no help for it—your love must needs find pleasure in demanding guarantees of mine, of which none the less there can be no doubt. We know well this sweet importunity of those who love—how they like to be told again and again that they are loved, not for the sake of reassurance, but for the pleasure which they find in their certitude thereof, and which they enjoy the more, the oftener it is repeated." In another part of this letter the Saint mentions the fact that he had recently had an interview with the Abbess of Puits d'Orbe: that unfortunate lady was still full of troubles, mostly of her own making, and, although Francis succeeded in bringing a temporary calm to her mind, she was destined to continue to the end in a spirit of restlessness and rebellion. Later on in the same letter the Bishop, under seal of confidence, tells his friend of an accusation that had wounded the most sensitive fibres of his heart. After relating the death of the Baroness de Thorens and the manner in which she had disposed of some of her property in favour of his brothers, he goes on to say: "With regard to this matter I notice that Mgr. de Bourges and other relatives of Baron de Chantal are

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MCCLXXXI, p. 132.

of opinion that it was I who obtained these benefits which our poor dead lady left to my brothers. That, indeed, hurt me, for I see well that the goodwill, which that prelate and the other gentlemen have honoured me with, will be lessened thereby. And yet, my very dear brother, I assure you, with the utmost honesty and in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, that neither directly nor indirectly, neither by my own act or the instrumentality of any other person, did I ever speak to that dear sister about making her will or doing what she did do for my brothers. Her mother, who was present at the time, and at least twenty people of honour could give unequivocal testimony on my behalf. . . . I have been unable to refrain from telling you of this little heartache, knowing to whom I am speaking ; for to write about it to M. de Bourges, who has not written about it to me, I do not judge seemly, and content myself with knowing in my heart that I am innocent of such vile practices."*

On January 21, 1618, Francis had occasion to write to the King of France. The Carmelites of the province of Narbonne had asked for authorization to regain possession of their monastery of Gex, which had been wrested from them by the Huguenots and of which there still remained a few ruined buildings and properties. Before replying to this request, the King had consulted Francis de Sales, and with regard to this matter it is interesting to note that the royal communication took four months to reach its destination. Francis was agreeable to the monks' petition, but suggested certain conditions. Moreover, he strenuously opposed the Carmelites' request that £300 should be granted to them from the money committed to him for the re-establishment of religion in that region. Of this sum he said : " I do not see that this should or could be granted to the Provincial, seeing that every bit of it is needed for the service and offices of religion and for the upkeep and repair of the church buildings. . . . Moreover, if there were anything left over and above, it ought to be destined for the use of the Capuchin fathers, who for some years now have been quartered at Gex and who have laboured there most zealously in the midst of many difficulties." In answer to another question in the King's letter Francis agreed that it would indeed be well to introduce into Gex some one of the reformed congregations, and he especially recommended the fathers of the Oratory, who, he said, were efficient in every kind of spiritual work and who would more easily enter into communication with the adversaries of the faith.† In the end the Carmelites obtained their desire and regained possession of their property on July 30, 1618 : whether they also obtained the £300 I am unable to say. At the conclusion of his letter to the King,

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCLXXXVII, p. 143.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCXCII.

Francis also recommended that the Government should replace the Huguenot officials with Catholic administrators, for, he added: "without this measure, the others would carry on their work but feebly and slowly."

On January 24 the Bishop suffered a bitter loss by the death of two of his intimate friends. The first of these was Dom Simplicien Fregose, the director of the college of Annecy, a priest of eminent piety and deep learning, respected and loved by his pupils, venerated throughout the city as a saint, and greatly valued for his work in the pulpit and the confessional. It is certain, indeed, that he shortened his life by his untiring work and zeal for souls.

The second friend whom Francis was now to lose, was Philippe de Quoëx, known as M. de Sainte-Catherine, to distinguish him from his brother, the Prior of Talloires. A cleric of sincere piety, prudence and learning, he was a canon of the Chapter and penitentiary of the diocese: no greater guarantee of his excellence can be given than the fact that he was the confidant and confessor of Francis de Sales, his saintly bishop.

As soon as the latter learned that M. de Sainte-Catherine was dangerously ill, he betook himself to prayer that such a valuable life might be spared to the diocese and to himself, but the answer to his prayer was other than he had hoped, for God revealed to him that this sickness was to end in the death of his friend. Thereupon the Saint's only thought was to assist the dying man in his last moments as best he could. Hastening to the home of Philippe de Quoëx, he found the Prior of Talloires overcome by grief at the thought of losing his brother. To him, as we have seen, Francis could give no comfort of earthly hope. "I have prayed to God earnestly," he said, "for the health of our beloved brother, but God has revealed to me that he wills to take him to himself. But be careful not to say a word of this. The pains that he suffers now are those he would have had to suffer in purgatory."* After giving M. de Sainte-Catherine all the spiritual help and consolation in his power, the Bishop returned to his house. There he met his brother, Louis de Sales, and asked what the doctors thought of the case: Louis answered that they still held out some hopes of recovery. "No," rejoined the Bishop, "he will die, I have a certain knowledge of it."†

Meanwhile the dying man was calmly preparing for his end and striving to console his brother. "Dry your tears, brother," he said, "and do not grieve for my death: for my Lord the Bishop has promised me that he will take care of you. But be careful—O be very careful—never to undertake anything without his advice. And this is one thing I must tell you before I go: for I must not carry

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 174 of vol. ii. † *Ibid.*

into the next world a thing of such importance. My Lord the Bishop is a great saint. He is a St John Baptist in his purity and a St Charles Borromeo in his humility and lowliness of mind."* A short time after this, as the end was manifestly drawing near, his friends sent word to the Bishop. The latter was at table, but hastened at once to the bedside of his friend. "Courage, brother," he said, "you are dying, but you are dying well. Repeat within your heart: 'Blessed be Jesus whom I love! Jesus in whom I hope, Jesus whose merits and sacred Passion are my trust!' Eternity is drawing near and you are going to see the Lord our God in the land of the living." The dying man obeyed the Bishop's commands, uttering the holy name again and again. Then, a short time before he lost the power of speech, he was heard to say: "Wait for me, Father Simplicien, wait for me." Meanwhile, the Bishop and those present had fallen on their knees and were reciting the litanies and prayers for the dying. Then, as M. de Sainte-Catherine was manifestly in great suffering, Francis arose, took from a reliquary a piece of wood stained with the blood of St Charles Borromeo, dipped it in some water, and gave this water to the dying man to drink, after blessing it. At once it became clear that the agony had ceased: over the face of the dying priest there came a great calm. A few moments afterwards he passed away in the sleep of the Lord. Francis blessed him for the last time, closed his eyes, and then gave way to his own grief in tears. For such, as his biographer says, is the love of the saints.†

In a letter, written on the 24th to Mother de Chantal, the Bishop described to her the last moments of their mutual friend. "God gave him to us," he concludes, "for his service: he has taken him from us for his glory. Blessed be his holy Name! Yet keep your heart in peace, along with mine, beneath the providence of that Saviour for whom we live and unto whom, with the help of his grace, we shall die. God will make good this loss, and will raise up labourers in the place of these two whom he had chosen to withdraw from his vineyard, that he may give them places at his table. But keep your heart in peace, for that is imperative. As the Scriptures tell us: *Weep but a little for the dead*, yet praise God none the less in the spirit of consolation, for our hope liveth. Amen."‡

Scarcely had the Bishop left the death-bed of his friend than he was called to the help of one who was dying in a state of despair. This man had been a notorious and public sinner, who now at the moment of death was tortured with black remorse at the thought

* *Ibid.*, p. 175.

† See Hamon, l. vi, chap. 6; C. A. de S., l. ix^me^; and note to Lettre MCCCXCIII, p. 157, E. N., Tom. XVIII.

‡ E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCXCIII, p. 156.

of his past life. He had given up all hope of his salvation, and obstinately refused to make his confession or receive the last sacraments. Francis, hearing of this, hastened to his bedside, and spoke to him so lovingly of the great mercy of God that the poor sinner said to himself: "If man can be so good, what then of God?" Gathering his courage together, he made an act of confidence in the divine compassion, asked pardon before those around him for the scandal of his life, confessed his sins to the Saint, received the last sacraments, and died shortly afterwards in a state of contrite and humble peace.

In the collection of the Bishop's correspondence, dating about this time, we find one of the most beautiful of his letters. It was written to the Prior of Talloires. "My dear brother (for am I not in the place of him whom our good God has taken to himself!), I have just been told that you are grieving continually over the loss you have suffered—a loss bitter indeed to your love. But really and truly you must not continue thus. For either you grieve for him or for yourself. If it is for him, why weep that our brother is in heaven, where tears shall be no more? But if it is for yourself, is there not therein too much self-love (I speak thus frankly with you), so that it will be thought that you have more love for yourself than for his happiness, which is beyond all compare? And would you wish that, for your sake, he was not with the One in whom we *move and be*, yes, all of us, so long as we submit ourselves to his holy pleasure and divine will?

"But come and see us, and often, and we will turn our *tears into joy*, remembering together the happiness which our good brother enjoys and which *shall not be taken away from him*. In fine, think often of his happiness and of him in that happiness, and you will live yourself in joy, such as I wish you with all my heart. And with this I recommend myself to your prayers and assure you that I am always yours,

"Franc^{s}.,
"*B. of Geneva.*"*

When Lent drew near, the Bishop made his way once more to Grenoble, visiting on his journey the celebrated sanctuary of Notre Dame de Myans where he stayed for two or three days. His Station at Grenoble was a repetition of the former occasions. The people came in crowds to hear him and listened to him eagerly. It seemed to them that the Spirit of God spoke by his mouth. Conversions were numerous, both amongst the Huguenots and amongst those Catholics who had been living evil lives. Many were drawn from the ordinary way of virtue towards a life of higher and more ardent

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCXCVIII, p. 163.

devotion. Marshal de Lesdiguières, who attended his sermons regularly and had frequent interviews with him, at length decided to abandon Protestantism and to re-enter the Catholic Church—a resolution which he fulfilled in after days.

It was during this Lent that Francis was affiliated to the Order of Minims. For this purpose he went to the monastery of these friars at Grenoble on April 2 with the double purpose of receiving the cord of the Order and of venerating the mantle of St Francis of Paula, which was exhibited to the people on the Saint's feast-day. Whilst he was engaged in this veneration, he found himself surrounded by the crowd of worshippers, who in their anxiety to get near the relic jostled him unmercifully, leaning over his shoulders and even treading upon him. Solely occupied with his devotion, the Saint continued his prayers unmoved and gave no sign that he was even aware of the treatment to which the zeal of the good folk was submitting him. Afterwards, when he was leaving the church, the friars apologized to him for the inconveniences of the incident. "Why!" answered the Bishop, "the people must needs satisfy their devotion. I assure you I did not notice to any extent those who were around me. I was thinking only of St Francis of Paula, who was giving me his cord and affiliation, and was putting me under obligation by inward and outward ties to consider all the Minims as my brothers." Henceforward, whenever he met one of the fathers of the Order, he would bring out his cord from his pocket and say: "Am I not one of your brothers? I can assure you in very truth that I am not a Minim in name only."*

In the midst of his numerous occupations at Grenoble Francis found time to devote to the affairs of the Visitation. He wrote letters to Dom Juste Guérin, who had gone to Rome as his representative on business both for the diocese and the new congregation. In these letters he deals with the matter of the vows to be taken and the office to be said by the sisters. We have seen, in a former chapter, how anxious he was that the sisters should recite, not the ordinary Office, but the Little Office of our Lady. His observations in Grenoble now gave him an example of what he wanted to avoid in this matter of the Office. He writes: "Indeed, only a week ago, being in a convent near this town, I saw things that might well make the Huguenots laugh, and some of the nuns told me that they never had less devotion than during the Office, in which they always managed to make many mistakes, as much from ignorance of accents and quantities as of the rubrics, to say nothing of the hurry with which they were forced to recite it; and that, neither knowing nor understanding anything of what they were saying, it was impossible for them, in the midst of such difficulties,

* *Année*, April 2; C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 158 of vol. ii.

to keep their attention."* As we already know, the Bishop eventually gained his point.

In the meanwhile certain ladies of Grenoble were working out plans for the foundation of a Visitation convent in their city. This project had been under consideration for about a year, and matters had so far advanced that Francis was now able to give it his consent. Accordingly he had sent for Mother de Chantal, who was to bring with her several sisters from Annecy for the new foundation. It was in connection with one of these sisters that the Bishop gave proof of the possession of prophetical powers. Mlle. de Glézat, a young lady of Grenoble, had joined the Institute in the face of much opposition from her mother and relatives, and was at the time living at Annecy under the name of Sister Anne Françoise. She was chosen to accompany Mother de Chantal, but, afraid of encountering trouble from her people if she returned to her native city, she had asked to be allowed to remain in Savoy. At the moment she was only a novice. Francis refused her request in the following terms: "Sister Anne Françoise must exercise self-denial with regard to her desire to remain in Annecy, because she will be a good *column* of observance and even, one day, a good Mother Superior of the house in Grenoble."† Events proved the truth of the Saint's forecast: after rendering invaluable service to the new convent, this sister was eventually placed in charge of it, and ruled it from 1635 to 1641.

Mother de Chantal arrived at Grenoble on April 7, 1618, which was the eve of Palm Sunday. In contrast with one or two other places to which she had been invited, she found everything ready in the home that had been temporarily hired for the housing of the sisters, and on the next day the new convent was opened with all the solemnity possible. On the Monday in Holy Week, together with the Bishop, she made her choice of a site for the building of the future house, which was to be erected on high and rocky ground that was somewhat difficult of access. This was selected as providing the sisters with plenty of pure air, and enabling them to lead their conventual life in greater seclusion. For by this time it was practically settled that the Visitation was to be mainly contemplative and strictly enclosed. As soon as a certain number of novices had been received and the life of the convent fully organized, Mother de Chantal returned to Annecy.

An example of the suspiciousness of the political atmosphere at this time is given in a letter written by Francis to the Duke of Savoy in March. Father Ange Calcagni, the guardian of a Franciscan monastery of Plaisance, had a brother at Annecy, who was an

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXV, p. 195.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDXIII, p. 192.

officer at the Court of Henry of Nemours. The great friar occasionally came to see this brother, and in 1617, on the occasion of one of these visits, he was arrested on mere suspicion and imprisoned at Chambéry. When Francis wrote on his behalf, Father Ange had been already three months in durance vile. The Bishop was able to assure Charles Emmanuel that he knew the prisoner well, and that he had never seen in him anything contrary to excellence of character and good religious observance: moreover, having visited the friar in prison, he found him assured in his conscience against any accusation. There is reason to believe that this letter had weight with the Duke, and Father Ange was able to return to his convent, where he was immediately restored to his position as Guardian.*

When Francis left Grenoble in Easter Week, he broke his journey at the Grande Chartreuse. For the account of an incident which happened during this visit we are indebted to Mgr. Camus, and we prefer to give it in that prelate's own words, though his picturesque and rather flamboyant style makes translation difficult.

"After preaching at Grenoble in Advent and Lent, Francis desired, before retiring to his home, to visit the Grande Chartreuse, which was only separated from that town by three leagues, in the most frightful desert—a desert, nevertheless, filled with an atmosphere of intense sacredness. St Bernard used to call it *locum horroris et solitudinis vastae.* The first time that I went there, when I was asked my opinion of it, I said that it was a hiding-place, horribly beautiful and terribly agreeable. And, to tell the truth, it is a prison so holy and so venerable that to serve God there in sanctity and righteousness is a very desirable liberty.

"When Blessed Francis went there, Dom Brunod' Affringues was Prior of the house and General of the whole of St Bruno's Order. He was a man of profound learning and of still more profound humility and simplicity, who, having never sought knowledge in the spirit of vainglory, was full of the most edifying charity. I knew him well and never saw aught in him but gentleness, candour, and kindness: to these qualities he joined a marvellously exquisite learning, which seemed as though infused into his mind by heaven and passed beyond human range. . . .

"He received our Saint with a welcome worthy of his piety, candour, and sincerity, of which you are about to hear an example that Francis used to qualify with the highest praise. After having conducted him to one of the guest-rooms, suitable to his rank, and having conversed with the Bishop on spiritual matters, it came to his mind that the next day was one of the feasts of the Order: this obliged the good man to take leave of our Francis. He explained

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDVIII, p. 185.

that he would willingly have remained until the hour for supper and even bedtime, but he felt that the Bishop would wish him to place his obedience before the duties of hospitality, in order to retire to his cell at the time prescribed by the rule for the preparation of his Office of Matins. Blessed Francis thoroughly approved of this exact observance, the more so on learning that the occasion was the feast day of a saint held in great veneration by the Order. After the Prior had taken leave of his guest with every proper mark of honour and respect and just as he was withdrawing to his cell, he was met by one of the officials of the house . . . who asked him where he was going and where he had left the Bishop of Geneva. 'I have left him,' said the Prior, 'in his room, after taking my leave of him, in order to recollect myself in our cell, before going to Matins to-night in honour of to-morrow's feast.'—'Really, reverend father,' said the official, 'a lot you understand about the courtesies of the world! After all, it is only a feast of the Order. But such a prelate as our guest—do we get one every day in this desert of ours? Surely you are aware that God is well pleased when we offer him our duties of hospitality and kindness. You will always have plenty of time for singing the praises of God, and there will be many opportunities of chanting Matins later on. Whose position is it to entertain such a prelate, if it is not yours, and who could do it better? What a disgrace for the whole house, if you leave him thus alone!'—'My son,' said the reverend father, 'I really believe that you are right and that I am at fault.' He immediately returned to Monsieur de Genève, and meeting the latter in his room, said quite simply: 'My Lord, on leaving this room, I met one of our officials, who told me that I was guilty of incivility in leaving you alone, that I could easily recover my Matins another time, but that we would not have amongst us every day a Bishop of Geneva. I believe he is right, and I have come straight back to ask your pardon and beg you to excuse my foolishness: for I assure you that I did it in ignorance and that I am telling you the truth.'" Francis afterwards said that he was more delighted with this incident than he would have been at the working of a miracle. We do not know the sequel—whether or not the Prior stayed with his guest for the rest of the evening. Knowing our St Francis, is it very unlikely to suppose that he suggested a way out of the difficulty by expressing a desire to attend Matins himself? We know, as a matter of fact, that he did attend this function on one of the nights of his stay at the monastery, for the story is told that the monks asked him to chant a lesson, but that he refused the invitation on the score that he was not sufficiently prepared and might disturb the Office.* The Saint was very much edified by all that he saw

* *Journal*, April 17–18, 1618, p. 230.

in the Grande Chartreuse, admiring both the excellence of its rule and the strictness with which its decrees were observed by the monks under the firm but gentle guidance of Dom Bruno d'Affringues.

On his way back to Annecy, he passed by Chambéry, where he had the happiness of visiting his greatest friend, President Antoine Favre. He reached home on April 21, 1618.

Here he found a letter awaiting him which caused him the greatest pain. It was written from Grenoble by Mme. Le Blanc de Mions, who was a great benefactor of the new convent in that town, and who had become a great admirer of the Bishop's sanctity. "Very dear daughter of my heart," wrote Francis, "you must know that I have a daughter who has written to me that my going away has brought great sorrow to her; that, unless she kept restraint upon herself, she would shed tears as numberless as the rainfall from heaven, in mourning for my departure; and similar beautiful things. But she outdoes even this, for she says that I am not a man, but some sort of divinity sent to be loved and admired, and, what is worse, she declares that she would go very much further still, if only she dared.

"What do you think of this, dear daughter? Does it not seem to you that it is wrong to talk thus? Are these not grossly exaggerated expressions? Nothing could excuse them but the affection which she bears me, which is indeed of the sacredest, but which is expressed in worldly terms. Now tell her, dear daughter, that we must never attribute divinity, in any way whatever, to miserable creatures; that to think, in addition, of the possibility of going still further in such flattery is imagination gone wild—at least its utterance is great license of speech; that we should be as anxious to avoid vanity in our talk as in our persons or our dress; that in future she must see that her language is simple and not over-garnished. But nevertheless tell her this with such gentleness, affection, and devotion that she will be able to take the rebuke in good part. It comes from a father's heart to a daughter very dear to that heart, and in whom it has placed all confidence."*

On April 25, 1618, Francis once more approaches the French authorities about the necessity of installing Catholic magistrates in the country of Gex. This time he writes to the Duke de Bellegarde. "The bearer of this letter," he says, "a young man from Gex, is leaving his country and his father's house in order to escape from the inhuman and continual persecution with which he has met since he abjured heresy and embraced the Catholic faith. It is a matter of concern that this faction of so-called Reformers, tolerated by the King's indulgence, should so insolently strive, by every extraordinary means, to hinder the subjects of the Crown in the free

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXVI, p. 197.

service of God according to the religion of King and kingdom—in which the State has ever remained and which has ever existed in the State, thanks be to God, for about twelve hundred years.

" Sir, it is for this reason that I have begged you to obtain Catholic magistrates for us in this bailiwick of Gex, who, by their authority, will be able to counteract the multitude and malice of these enemies of the religion of both King and kingdom. These men are so audacious in evil and so full of cunning in its execution that, if they are not restrained with a strong hand, they will never cease from hindering by every kind of violent measure all progress in the conversion of souls."*

At this time Mother de Chantal was still engaged at Grenoble, and Francis takes care to give her news of the community at Annecy and to advise her on certain questions that had arisen. He first assures her that the sisters who had taken the places of those sent to Grenoble were doing their duties well. " Sister Anne Marie," he writes, " is full of devotion and goodness, as you can imagine ; Sister Paul Jerome, I am told, does marvellously well, and your Sister Procurator works miracles, save that Sister Anne Jacqueline (Coste) always talks to her in the Savoyard dialect and does her reckoning in terms of the money of Savoy, neither of which she understands. We shall have to have interpreters ! "

In another paragraph he gives advice as to the custom in many religious houses of saying *we* and *our* instead of *I* and *my :* this usage is a reminder of the laws of humility and of poverty, though it sometimes plays havoc with the laws of grammar. " The *we* and *our* are not unpleasing to me," says Francis. " Nevertheless this custom must be so moderated that one must not, by too great habit of speaking thus, make faults, sins, and imperfections common property and render confessions unintelligible to confessors unused to the house. Consequently, it seems sufficient to say *we* and *our* of that which is really common to all, such as our room, our rosary, our work, our sister, our mother, our exercise ; for one can say well enough : I have not performed our morning exercise, I was not present at our dinner, etc."

Alluding to the fact that President Antoine Favre and M. de la Roche were both anxious that their daughters, nuns of the Order, should be sent to a projected house at Turin, where they themselves lived, Francis playfully remarks to the Foundress : " You see, consequently, that there is a certain amount of human consideration in these good fathers."

In these days of daily Communion the following passage is of interest : " I fully consent that our very dear Sister Peronne Marie should communicate three or four times a week, and even oftener,

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXVII, p. 198.

until the publication of our Rules, and that always one of the sisters should communicate along with her: when she does not go to Communion another sister must do so, in such a way that always someone will receive the Blessed Sacrament every day: for I am ever more and more desirous, as I have told you, that in our congregation Communion should be received each day by some of the sisters, they taking this in turn, on account of the desire expressed by the sacred Council of Trent that someone should communicate at each Mass; and this I will express more fully in the Rules."*

All during the erection of the convent of the Visitation there had been a lot of trouble about garden property, mainly with the Dominican fathers, on account of the damage and deterioration of their land due to the new building. It was a complicated affair, involving a lawsuit and continual negotiations. At one time, by way of finding a solution of the difficulty, it was suggested that the Barnabite fathers should surrender for a consideration a piece of their land, in order to help the sisters; but so many difficulties arose that the idea was abandoned. Dom Juste Guérin, who was a very loyal friend to the Bishop and to the nuns, had exerted all his influence on their behalf, and, when the proposed cession was put on one side, he was greatly grieved and wrote a kind of apology to Francis. If only for the few lines about St Jane Frances de Chantal we give the Bishop's answer. "As to the garden, my very dear father, I no longer give it a thought—not that I do not see well that the college would not have been any the worse for our project, nay rather, would have profited by reason of the recompense which we would have given. But, by God's grace, I never had any desire to be contentious or to wound the feelings of any one. Our daughters of the Visitation will erect their building without this comfort; nay, they will content themselves therewith willingly—and even, I may say, they will be very contented indeed, since no better can be done. Moreover, they know that it is not unsuitable that the spouses of him, who had not where to lay his head in this world, should not be housed comfortably. As you know, my dear father, the mother who governs this new flock is so well accustomed to living on the hill of Calvary that any other earthly home seems ever to her too fine. And so she has no bitter feeling about this rebuff, knowing well that the pilgrims who are to find shelter in this dwelling, having but to stay the night of this short life therein, will be so occupied with finding a home in the fair resting-place of their lasting city, that all else will be to them a matter of indifference."†

On May 23, 1618, Francis received a visit from Antoine Favre.

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXIX, p. 201.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXXI, p. 212.

The two old friends passed several days together in a renewal of their old companionship. Amongst other things they assisted at a tragi-comedy, presented by the students of the college. This visit of the First President was regarded as a great mark of honour by the civic authorities of the town: at a council it was decided to send "to Mgr. the Right Reverend Bishop of Geneva . . . who doubtless will entertain the said Seigneur President at his house, and in recognition of his daily favours to the town . . . a turkey, two chickens, and a hare."

One of the duties of his state which Francis was always scrupulous to perform was that of assisting at the solemn functions of his cathedral on the great feasts of the Church: thus during the course of this spring he officiated there on the feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi. According to the *Journal* of M. Gonthier it was on this last solemnity that Francis, while he was carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession, was fired upon by the advocate Pellet, without, however, sustaining any harm. The criminal was seized by the guardians of the law, taken to Miolans, and cast into prison.

In June, 1618, news came to Annecy that the peace, already signed between Spain and Savoy, had now, in spite of many difficulties, been definitely ratified, and that the town of Verceil, captured by the Spaniards, had been restored to the Duke. On the feast of St John the Baptist Francis chose peace as the theme of his sermon to the people of Annecy. From the notes left to us of this discourse we quote two passages. After his introduction, in which he alludes to the feast of the day, and after a quotation of the words of Zachary—*to direct our feet in the way of peace*—he says:

"You see already, my dear brethren, that I desire to mingle with my words something of the joy of our peace. How indeed can I be silent before so great a cause for joy? Moreover, present circumstances are opportune, for to-day is the anniversary of the first sermon which I preached to you twenty-five years ago. And I congratulate myself upon it, for you have always been to me a sympathetic audience. If, as is true, you have had many orators of greater worth, you have never had one that held you in greater love. And since I have always announced to you the gospel of peace, now, on the fall of this anniversary, I will begin the twenty-sixth year of my preaching by speaking to you of peace once more."

He then goes on to treat of St John and his mission, of the messages of peace that accompanied the coming, the life, and the teaching of Christ, of the spiritual nature of this peace. Then he continues: "Although this peace is in the main spiritual, it is none the less temporal also: for the evangelical law excludes all war. *They shall turn their swords into plough-shares and their spears into*

sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war. And Christ frequently speaks of Christians as sheep. Nevertheless, because of the malice of men, war is permitted: it is lawful to repel force by force. Hence our John receives the soldiers. The centurion and many kings were saints. War may be the working of the justice of God.

"But how happy are we to whom peace comes beyond all our expectations! And with so much honour to our Prince, who has measured his sword with that of the most powerful king! May this peace last! That is my desire."

He ends with a practical admonition as to the finding of peace in the fulfilment of the Gospel maxims, applicable and advantageous to nations in diplomacy and to individuals in private life.*

It was during the month of June that the Bishop gave a sitting to an artist who was desirous of painting his portrait. Several of the Saint's biographers assert that this was the first occasion on which he submitted to have his likeness taken. This is not correct. M. Gonthier says: "There is preserved at Salins, in the home of the Furets, one of those portraits which Francis had himself given, in 1611, to one of the seigneurs of the place. Another portrait, bearing the date 1613, is to be found at the house of M. le Comte de Loche at Grésy sur Aix; a third, of 1617, is seen in the presbytery of Porrentruy (Switzerland)."† Speaking of the Saint's opinion on this question of portraiture, Mgr. Camus says: "I have known great servants of God who would never allow artists to paint their portrait, esteeming that this could not be done without some kind of vanity. . . . Our Saint was not of their opinion. . . . 'If we are not only not sorry but even glad to see our books—the portraits of our minds—in the hands of our friends, why deny them the representation of our features, if that gives them some sort of satisfaction?'"‡ It is, nevertheless, quite clear from the story which follows, that it was not always easy to obtain from him the favour of a sitting. Possibly this reluctance was due to the many calls upon his time. At any rate, during this month of June, M. Michel Favre, instigated by a lady who was probably Mme. de Granieu, came to the Bishop and said to him: "My Lord, you are being the cause of many sins against Almighty God."—"What do you mean?" said the Saint. "By refusing to allow your portrait to be painted," answered M. Michel, "you are making many people commit sins of discontent."—"If that is so," rejoined the Bishop, "I will consent to their wishes: but only on the condition that, if I let them paint the portrait of this man of earth, they will pray that

* E. N., Tom. VIII, Sermon CXLVI, p. 370.

† Note i, Hamon, vol. ii, p. 215. ‡ *Esprit*, Part XVIII, Section 32.

I may draw within my soul the image of the God of heaven."* Accordingly an artist, Jean Baptiste Costaz was immediately commissioned for the work. The Bishop, however, gave the poor man only one sitting, and this so short that his effort to obtain a living likeness was not very successful. He made several copies of this study, and managed to sell some of them, but the Bishop's friends were not satisfied with the resemblance any more than the artist himself, and he sought another interview with his subject. "My Lord," he said, "I have come to beg of you in the name of charity and truth, to let me have another sitting. In the name of charity, for it will put bread into my mouth. In the name of truth, because my clients make me swear that the picture is drawn from nature: now that, my Lord, is an untruth to which you alone can put an end; for I love you so much that, when I have you not before my eyes, I always make you handsomer than you are." Francis was amused at the artfulness of the argument with its pretended blunder in tact. "I am inclined to think that your reasoning is ingenious rather than ingenuous," he answered; "but, however, that may be, I must not for this once be obstinate." Thereupon, he took his seat and posed for the space of two hours. When the sitting was finished, the artist in his gratitude exclaimed: "Truly, my Lord, you have done me the greatest of charities."—"And you," answered Francis, "you have caused me the greatest of mortifications: but I forgive you, on condition that you never do it again."

A short time afterwards one of his friends, having heard that the Bishop's portrait had been painted, wrote and asked for a copy. "I am sending you," wrote Francis, "the picture of this earthly man, so impossible is it for me to refuse any of your wishes. They tell me I have never been painted well, and I do not think it matters much. I have borrowed this copy to give it to you, for I have not one of my own. Ah, if only the image of my Creator were vividly depicted in my soul, how gladly would I send you that!"†

In the early days of July, 1618, Francis was greatly grieved to hear that the Duke de Bellegarde, Governor of Burgundy, was dead: the news, however, proved false. In a letter written on the 9th, the Bishop describes to this friend of his both his sorrow and his joy. "I cannot tell you how deeply my heart has been worried in the midst of my uncertainty about your health. . . . But—God be praised—after having wept and mourned bitterly over your death, which was reported to me, I can now bless the divine Majesty and beg him with the greatest consolation to preserve your life. Indeed,

* Hamon puts this request in the mouth of the artist; the *Année* is that of M. Favre: the latter seems more probable.

† *Esprit*, Part XVIII, Section 32.

my dear son, you must take care of that life henceforth, since you now see how desirable and useful it is reckoned to be by so many excellent people : for I learn from Gex that throughout the province which you govern public acts of thanksgiving have been offered up for your recovery."

In the passage that follows we are obliged to accuse our Saint of preaching to others what he did not practice himself. " Therefore, my dear son, take care of your life . . . preserve it carefully by all suitable means, supporting and strengthening its weakness and counteracting the ravages of age and sickness by means of rest and a regime suitable for that purpose."*

The truth of this accusation is borne out by an incident which happened five days later. After having officiated and preached in the church of the Franciscan Recollects of Annecy, he had gone home in the afternoon, tired by his labours. Between four and five o'clock he received a visit from two of the Capuchin fathers, who complained to him gently that he had been all day with the Recollects and had not honoured their church with his presence. Now Francis had always a very warm corner in his heart for these fathers, because of the excellent work which they did throughout his diocese and especially in the districts of Chablais and Gex, where they had fought perseveringly for the faith in the midst of the most discouraging conditions. Consequently he met them now with the generosity which they deserved, but which under the circumstances was none the less generous on his part. " You are quite right," he answered. " But there is still time to remedy that." Thereupon, picking up his episcopal robes, he accompanied them to their church, officiated at Benediction, and preached an eloquent sermon to their people. The good fathers were greatly touched by his kindness, and, as he left their house, expressed their gratitude in the warmest terms, apologizing for having thus troubled him after his other fatigues of the day. " You must know, my good fathers," he answered, " that I belong without distinction to every branch of the Franciscan Order, and have a double bond therewith : for I was named Francis Bonaventure over the baptismal font, and since then you have still further placed me under the protection of your Founder, by affiliating me to your holy Order."†

On July 19 Francis paid a visit to the monastery of Talloires, of which he had been appointed Superior, in order to continue his supervision of the good work of reform in the life of the religious. Whilst in this neighbourhood, he also went to the priory of St Jorioz, where he transferred the relics of the patron to a more befitting position than they had formerly occupied. Soon after his return to Annecy he sent an invitation to the Council of the Holy

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDCXLVII, p. 245. † *Année*, 14 July.

House of Thonon to send deputies to an assembly which was to be held at Annecy in the early days of August. This meeting was to concern itself with the means of improving the unsatisfactory state of affairs which had been hampering the life of the Holy House for some time.

During the month of August he received a letter from the celebrated Jesuit father, Leonard Lessius (or Leys). In his answer he says :

" Our dear Master Gabriel has brought me your Reverence's letter, by which I was greatly honoured and charmed. For a long time I have held in affection, nay, venerated, both yourself and your name, father, not only because of the esteem in which I always hold your Society, but because of your Reverence's remarkable works, which, after I had first heard of their merits by hearsay, I have since read, studied, and admired.

" Thus some years ago I read that most useful work *De Justitia et Jure*, in which you have excellently solved the difficulties of that part of theology both concisely and clearly, with a skill surpassing that of any author that I had ever read before.

" Afterwards I saw the counsel which by your instrumentality the Angel of Great Counsel has given as to the choice of the true religion.* Finally, when passing through Lyons, I saw in the library of the college your *Treatise on Predestination*, and although, as happens under such circumstances, I was only able to give it a cursory examination, I was able to see that your Reverence therein embraces and supports the doctrine, honoured by antiquity and by the suasion and authority of Scripture, of predestination to glory as a consequence of the prevision of good works. And this indeed pleased me most mightily, for I have always considered this opinion to be the truer and more beautiful view, as being more in tune with the mercy and grace of God—which indeed I have already indicated in my little book on the Love of God." The letter concludes with an eloquent expression of affection and of intense desire for the welfare of his new friend in the future.†

On this same August 27 the Bishop endured a great disappointment ; for the Dominican fathers of Annecy refused to ratify the sale of a part of their garden to the nuns of the Visitation, after having agreed to do so. How deeply he was hurt can be seen from the following passage taken from a letter to Dom Juste Guérin, in which there is a touch of bitterness very rarely found in his correspondence. " I find I was celebrating a victory prematurely the other day, when I wrote to you that we were in agreement with the fathers of St Dominic ; for, when the contract was drawn up,

* *Quæ Fides et Religio sit capessenda Consultatio.*

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXI, p. 271.

they refused to keep their word, so that we shall have to go on with the affair in the civil courts. In this case, if justice is done, they will have cause to regret their refusal of ten thousand florins for what is not worth five hundred. I see well enough now that, whatever we give them—another garden or aught else—it will be impossible to bring them into line, for they are grown obstinate out of sheer contrariness." The affair of this garden was at length settled on September 15.*

Three days later Francis wrote a letter to the Duke of Savoy, asking for assistance on behalf of the inhabitants of the valley of Aulps; these people had recently been the victims of some grafe disaster, the nature of which is not mentioned in the letter and to which historical investigation finds no record. On August 31 he was at Rumilly, where he blessed a chapel for the Capuchin friars.

His next notable task was in connection with the Abbey of Sixt. In a former chapter we have described how Francis had used every effort to bring a measure of reform to this house and how his efforts were to some extent successful. It was not long, however, before trouble again broke out. The commendatory Abbot, Jacques de Mouxi, kicked against the goad and refused to submit to the new discipline. He appealed both at Chambéry and Vienne against the Bishop's assertion of authority over his monastery, and employed every kind of artifice in his revolt, descending even to ridicule and invective. Several of the religious, alarmed at the thought of strict observance, joined forces with the Abbot and succeeded in rousing most of the noblemen of the country in their behalf. But Francis, by the tact of his dealings and the justice of his contentions, succeeded in winning over a majority of the canons in the monastery. The Prior also was on his side.

In a letter to the prior and canons, written on April 14, 1606, the Bishop said: "It would be a good thing if you were to give me an attestation, as coming from your Chapter and religious, declaring that you received me in my quality of Superior and that you fully acquiesce in my decrees. Now, since this is the truth, and since I only desire to see the end of this law-suit for the glory of God and the welfare of your monastery, I believe that you will make no difficulty about sending me this declaration."† That Francis was justified in his confidence is evident from his next letter, dated April 24, 1606. "I thank you for the documents which you have sent to me, which I desire to use only for your peace and consolation. I hope that in a short time I shall obtain a judicial sentence in favour of my just right, and with its help we can undertake

* E. N., Lettre MCDLXII, p. 274 and note i, p. 275.

† E. N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCXLIII, p. 169.

the business so effectively that the Abbot will be forced to see reason."*

This hope also was fulfilled. The Bishop proved with documentary evidence that since the year 1161 the monastery of Sixt had submitted to episcopal jurisdiction, and even that the Founders themselves had stipulated that the Ordinary should have power to depose disobedient and rebellious abbots. The Senate therefore gave a verdict in his favour. From that day forth, Francis had kept the reformation of this monastery in his mind, but, as the matter was both important and delicate, he thought well not to press it unduly, but to give it full consideration and thought, in order that the final result might be successful and permanent.

In December, 1617, Francis was able to write : " Having learned from the Prior, M. Jean Moccand, your excellent dispositions towards restoring your monastery and community to the ancient piety of your Order, I praise God therefor and am greatly rejoiced at it, as being a thing extremely important for the service of God, for your own comfort and salvation, and for the edification of the faithful. For this reason I exhort you with all my heart that you would at the earliest resolve to make a beginning. With a view to your service and assistance, I will send you a learned and excellent man, as soon as you let me know that it is time for such ; and I myself, if it is necessary, will very willingly come to you and will consider myself most happy if I can be of help in the furtherance of such a useful and holy design. Take courage : God will be in the midst of you, and will accomplish this work, if you beg his assistance. He would not have given you these excellent dispositions, except that he wills you to advance towards the perfect completion of your task."†

The Bishop's exhortation was not in vain. On December 20, 1617, the " Prior, religious, and canons regular of this monastery . . . made a solemn promise and agreement to live henceforward in communion, and for this effect throwing all their prebends, vestiaries, and other rights and duties in common."‡ This act was signed by the Bishop on January 23, 1618.

It was in September that Francis found himself able to fulfil his promise to visit the monastery of Sixt. He left Annecy on the 10th or thereabouts, passing through Saint Jeoire on his way, where he broke his journey at the house of an innkeeper, named Louis Danthoz, in order to rest during the midday heat. As both he and his retainers were suffering from thirst, he asked his host to bring them some wine. The innkeeper answered with apologies that the only wine in

* *Ibid.*, Lettre CCCXLV, p. 172.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCCCLV, p. 81.

‡ Dep. de Jean Moccand. See note, p. 82 of Tom. XVIII, E. N.

the house had gone bad, and advised his guests to drink water rather than run the risk of making themselves ill. At the Bishop's request, however, he brought some of the soured liquid in a glass. Francis, putting it to his lips, tasted it, and, giving it back to his host, remarked : " Why, this is very good wine indeed : you need not be afraid to give it to our people." The innkeeper, struck with astonishment, sampled the contents of the glass himself, and was bound to admit that the liquid, which he himself had condemned as vinegar, had now become an excellent vintage. The stock from which he had drawn the sample was found to be equally good, and he and his guests were able to quench their thirst without feeling the slightest ill-effect. Afterwards, when Francis and his companions had continued their journey, M. Danthoz sold the wine to his neighbours at a good profit to himself and to the satisfaction of his customers, who were loud in their praise of its merits.*

Arriving at Sixt on September 12, the Bishop received the warmest welcome from the canons, and found them willing, as a body, to accept his decisions as to their future manner of life. He reaffirmed all that had been decided upon during his former visit, and furthermore ordered that, after the lapse of one year, which should be regarded as a time of probation, all the canons should pronounce their vows, and that thenceforth every novice should be admitted to profession at the end of a year if he was considered fit, should be sent away if not found suitable, or should be tested for another year in case of doubt ; that the professed religious alone should wear the cape, the novices using the surplice ; that all the church offices should be carried out with the same ritual as was in use at the diocesan cathedral, and that every Saturday the prior should put up a list of those who were to officiate or take part in the ceremonies during the following week ; that from amongst the most exemplary of the canons choice should be made of those who were to preside over the exercises and see that the Rule was observed—a prior and sub-prior whom all would obey ; that another religious should be appointed Master of Novices and should be helped in his work by two capable men, one to deliver lectures on the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the other to give instructions on the Office, ceremonials, and other duties of their state ; that the prior—or in his absence, the sub-prior—should hold chapter every Saturday, in order to correct faults against the Rule or anything else that was reprehensible ; that nothing important should be decided upon without consultation of the Chapter or, in case of need, of the Bishop ; that all the religious should take their meals in common, during which some devotional book should be read ; that the canons should study theology and works of piety, abstaining at the same time from

* C. A. de S., l. ix^{me}, p. 177 of vol. ii.

useless literature ; that women should never be allowed to enter the monastery ; that the house should keep twelve resident canons, supplying them with board, clothing, and all other things necessary.

To these rules the community, as a body, agreed to submit. Only one of the religious proved recalcitrant, and he indeed carried his opposition so far as to threaten the Bishop. Francis, however, treated him with such gentleness and forbearance that he also was won over to a better spirit, and eventually became a most regular observant of Rule.

While the Bishop was at Sixt a number of people came from Faucigny, Chablais, and Gex to see him on business. This threw a great burden upon the hospitality of the house ; we are told that as many as two hundred extra meals had to be provided for persons of rank and distinction, apart from what was given to their retainers. Francis was greatly worried at the loss thus incurred by the monks, and told them that he would beg God to recompense them for their hospitality. As a matter of fact the monastery suffered in no way by his visit. For one thing, the neighbouring river supplied fish in such quantity and size as passed all expectation and experience. Within the monastery itself a miraculous multiplication took place. " After the departure of the holy Bishop," says Charles Auguste de Sales, " it was discovered that the diminution in the store of bread and of wine was not as great as if the community had been left to its ordinary routine, so that these two hundred and forty meals had lessened neither the bread nor the wine. On the contrary, there remained more of each than if the community had not been surcharged with any strangers. Six days before the arrival of the Saint they had broached a tun of wine and they had baked bread to the ordinary measure, and no other wine was drunk nor bread eaten : and yet there was still bread left for several days." Then the writer gives the names of the prior and religious—seven in all—who afterwards testified under oath to the actuality of this miracle.*

On September 15, 1618, Francis left the monastery on his homeward journey : he passed through Samöens, where he settled a dispute between the canons of the collegiate church and the syndics, and also stopped at Mélan, where he gave the tonsure to twenty-two candidates for the clerical or religious state. He reached Annecy on the 21st and the next day held an ordination : amongst those tonsured was his nephew Etienne, son of Gallois de Sales, and amongst the sub-deacons François Michel di Basterga, a son of the Captain Vitto di Basterga, who had helped Francis so energetically in the work of converting the country of Gex. By the end of this month it was made definitely certain that the Bishop was to go to Paris in the suite of the Cardinal Prince of Savoy.†

The early part of the month of October must have been a busy

* Ç. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 183 of vol. ii. † *Journal*, Sept., 1618.

period for the Saint, who would have to make preparations for his journey and arrange for the administration of the diocese during his absence. The affairs of the Visitation Order also claimed a good deal of his attention. On October 10, he gave Mother de Chantal formal letters of obedience directing her to go to Bourges, for the founding of a convent in that city: on the 16th, as Founder of the congregation and representative of the Holy See, he went to the First Monastery in order to erect the Visitation as a religious order, in obedience to the Bull of Pope Paul V, dated April 23, 1618. "The day after the establishment of perpetual enclosure, . . ." says the *Année*, "our holy Founder came to the First Monastery of Annecy and gave formal command to our worthy Mother de Chantal that she should leave Annecy and go to Bourges in Berry, there to found the fifth convent of the Order. On this occasion he gave an admirable address to our first mothers: 'Yesterday,' he said, 'I came to close your gates: and to-day I have come to open them. Yesterday I gave you enclosure: to-day I bring you orders to journey elsewhere.' Then he showed them how reasonable and full of charity was the Church; how there were times when she ordered enclosure, and other times when she commanded them to go abroad; and how the whole of perfection consisted in doing each thing in its proper season according to the will of divine Providence."*

About this time Francis received a request from Father Ancina, a brother of Bl. Juvenal, that he should write the latter's life. In his answer to this request he said: "Although I am convinced of my utter inability to write, as it should be written, the life of the Right Reverend Bishop, your brother, because of my incompetency and lack of style, yet the satisfaction I should have found in obliging your Reverence and in giving testimony to my esteem for that great servant of God, had given me some faint hope of being able to undertake the work. But, seeing that I am now called to Paris in the service of our Most Serene Highness, the Prince Cardinal, during this journey to France, I have lost all hope of being able to accomplish it. . . ."† So the life of Bl. Juvenal was left to other hands, and we have no means of knowing how our Saint would have acquitted himself in this particular branch of literature. We may safely surmise, however, that his work would have been devotional and didactic rather than merely historical.

Another letter, written on the same date of the 16th, gives directions for the distribution of his usual charities during his absence. With regard to this thoughtfulness on the part of Francis, M. Michel Favre gave the following testimony: "When the *Beatus* went away on a journey, he never failed to leave me a list of unfortunate and necessitous people, and of the sum he wished to be

* *Année*, Oct. 10. † E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXXIX, p. 298.

distributed to each of these ; and at other times he would give me the name of some confidential person to whom I would have to pay a lump sum for alms to be distributed more secretly."*

On October 22 Mother de Chantal set out for Bourges : on the same date the Bishop began his long journey to Paris.

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, p. 300, note iii.

CHAPTER X*
(1618–1619)

Francis goes to Paris with Cardinal Maurice of Savoy—Entry into the city—Apparent failure of first Sermon—Death of M. de Charmoisy—Preaches Advent Station—Francis as an orator—The Royal marriage settled—The Saint's opinion of Princess Christine—Letter about supernatural visions—Other letters—Frequent sermons—André Duval—Celebration of the Royal marriage—Lenten Station—Francis converts a despairing criminal—Death of Philibert Scaglia—Arrival of Mother de Chantal—Governor of La Fère converted—Other conversions—Philip Jacob—Father Suffren—M. Bourdoise—St Vincent of Paul—Angélique Arnauld—Francis goes to Orleans—The interpretation of Scripture—Ill-health of the Saint—He refuses the Abbacy of St Geneviève—Also the Coadjutorship of Paris—Letter to the Duke on behalf of M. de Quoëx—Miracle of the piece of money—Francis visits Maubuisson and Andilly—Letters of farewell.

FOR some time past Charles Emmanuel had entertained in his mind a project of marriage between his son Prince Victor Amadeus and Princess Christine of France, sister of Louis XIII. In this project he was encouraged by the Duke de Lesdiguières. Having already sounded the opinion of the French Court, he decided to send his son Maurice, the Cardinal, on an embassy to Paris, to make a formal demand for the hand of the young princess on behalf of his heir. One of the Duke's greatest qualities was his power of choosing fit instruments for any purpose that he had in mind, and in selecting the young Cardinal for this embassy he was probably employing his usual foresight, in spite of Prince Maurice's reputation for vanity and frivolity.† However, to make sure of success, Charles Emmanuel sent with his son a retinue of distinguished men, who would give him wise counsel and help him in his mission with the able use of their own talents. Amongst these counsellors were the Secretary of State, Carron ; Octave Viale, Bishop of Saluzzo ; Antoine Favre ; and last, but not least, Francis de Sales. It is said that the Duke hesitated for some time as to the choice of the Bishop of Geneva, and that he only made up his mind affirmatively on the request of Richelieu‡ : the difficulty about this last statement lies in the fact that the great statesman, then in the

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 7.

† Mugnier's assertion as to the Cardinal's character. ‡ Hamon.

beginning of his career, was at this time sharing in retirement the recent disgrace of the Queen Mother.

Francis, as we know, had already received several invitations to preach in the French capital, but had never succeeded in obtaining the Duke's consent: now that Charles Emmanuel saw political profit in the Saint's presence in Paris, he altered his former policy and commanded Francis to attach himself to the Cardinal's suite.

Prince Maurice arrived at Montmélian from Turin on October 17, and it was probably here that he was joined by the Bishop of Geneva. From Montmélian the embassy went to Grenoble, where Lesdiguières gave the Cardinal a magnificent reception. Leaving the capital of Dauphiny on October 21, the travellers reached Lyons, in which city they stayed but a short time: in fact, our Saint was only able to pay the briefest of visits to Mother de Chantal and the sisters of the Visitation.* From Lyons the party went on to Roanne, where they embarked on the Loire. Of this part of the journey we have a short description from the Bishop, written on November 9, to Donna Ginevra Scaglia, the daughter of a well-known diplomat in the ducal service. "The journey," says Francis, "has been excellent. Our Most Serene Lord has had a most flattering reception *en route*. On all sides he has received the warmest welcome, marked by the general applause of both great and small, everybody blessing God and the House of our princes, and giving evidence of a particular desire for the projected marriage. During our five days of navigation I was able to enjoy at leisure the company of the Cardinal, not to speak of many other good things. Twice a day His Highness devoted himself to the reading of French, in order to gain greater familiarity both with that language and with the affairs of the country. Sometimes even he would take an oar and make me row along with him, thinking at first that I was unacquainted with that art, in which, however, it happened that I am a past master.

"On our arrival at Orleans we were received by MM. de Bethune† and di Modena who had come to meet us. Here we stayed two days in order to take rest, where also His Highness received Holy Communion on the occasion of All Saints' Day."‡

According to M. Mugnier, in his biography of Antoine Favre, "the embassy left Orleans on November 4 in the royal carriages and under the guidance of MM. de Bethune and di Modena. On Tuesday, November 6, the Cardinal heard Mass at Chartres." Leaving Chartres on that date, "they stopped at Bourg la Reine,

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, notes on pp. 296 and 301.

† A brother of the great Sully.

‡ E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXXXIV, p. 305.

where," says our chronicler, "they dined sumptuously and where they were visited by Cardinals de la Rochefoucaud and de Retz, the Nuncio Bentivoglio, the Ambassador of Venice, and several bishops, amongst whom was the Bishop of Belley, Pierre Camus. Continuing his journey towards Paris, the Cardinal was met by other lords, including the Count d'Auvergne, and, later on, the Duke of Nemours, whom he welcomed most graciously, and whom he took with him into his own carriage."*

On their arrival in Paris the Cardinal, Francis de Sales, and Antoine Favre were conducted to a house in the rue de Tournon, a mansion which had formerly belonged to Marshal d'Ancre, but which had lately been used for ambassadorial purposes. That very evening, November 7, the Cardinal was received in private audience by the King.

Of the embassy's entry into Paris we have, in a letter of Antoine Favre to the Duke of Savoy, an interesting description, full of a certain naive pride that was characteristic of the great lawyer. "It might perhaps be more fitting," he says, "to be silent about this matter, and modesty might well impose its law upon me: but I cannot hide from Your Highness all the pleasure which I experienced that day, when our great Cardinal, in the midst of much splendour, made his solemn entry into that vast city. I gave way for a moment to the intoxication of glory. Placed in the same carriage as the Bishop of Geneva, I compared my position to that of the younger Pliny, when, seated by the side of Tacitus at the public games, he was never more greatly flattered, he said, than on seeing himself pointed out by the people as a personage of rare merit, for the simple fact that a great man had thus distinguished him and admitted him to such intimacy. Amidst the throng of spectators, who crowded around us, there was not one, having the slightest acquaintance with theology and law, who, as we passed along, did not hasten to point us out and to say: 'There is the Bishop of Geneva, the greatest theologian of the day! And there is President Favre, who had published so many works and who is like a brother to Francis de Sales in the deep love and peerless friendship that unites them to each other!' I would be ashamed to relate it, if there had not been trustworthy witnesses thereof, amongst whom is the right Reverend Bishop of Belley."†

The day after his arrival the Cardinal, accompanied doubtless by his suite, was granted an official reception by the King and his consort, Anne of Austria, in the presence of the usual Court officials. He then passed to the apartments of the young princesses and was introduced to Princesse Christine and her sister, who were surrounded by the ladies of their Court.

* Mugnier, *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 445. † *Ibid*, p. 457.

For Francis there was other work in store. He had scarcely arrived in the city when he was invited to preach the panegyric of St Martin, on the feast of that saint, in the church of the Oratorians. In accordance with his usual principle he accepted the invitation. Consequently, on November 11, an immense crowd assembled in the Oratory church, anxious to hear the eloquence of one so renowned for his preaching and for his theological writings. The King and his Queen, prelates of all degrees, gentlemen and ladies of the Court, theologians and scientists, and great numbers of the people were gathered together: so crowded was the church that the preacher himself, on his arrival, was unable to gain entrance by the doors, and it was found necessary to admit him into the building through a window, with the aid of a ladder. In the presence of this distinguished congregation the Saint's humility took alarm: resolutely putting on one side any attempt at high-flown oratory, he preached to the most critical audience in the world the simplest of sermons in the simplest of styles, contenting himself with a plain narration of St Martin's life and actions. Needless to say, there was great disappointment among the seekers after sensation; comments were rife on the poverty of the preacher's style and matter, Parisian wit found an opportunity for exercising its satire in the performance of "this mountaineer," and someone declared that it was scarcely worth while to come so far in order to say so little. One lady, more far-seeing than the others, complained to the Bishop himself that he had chosen the wrong occasion for practising his humility. Francis parried this thrust by remarking: "What did they expect? Assuredly, from a mountain tree you can scarcely gather aught but wild fruit." That the Saint's apparent failure in this sermon was deliberate we know from a letter of St Vincent de Paul, who learned the fact from the lips of Francis himself, and who recorded his admiration for this self-humiliation in a letter written to his brethren exactly thirty-seven years afterwards.*

On November 17 the Cardinal of Savoy had another official reception from Louis XIII, and on this occasion made formal request on behalf of the Prince of Piedmont for the hand of Princess Christine. The King replied that he had always approved of the projected marriage when it was discussed before him, that he was in agreement with the desires of the Duke of Savoy and the Prince, that he would deal with the matter before his Council, and would then make known his will. The Cardinal by this time had completely gained the good graces of Louis XIII, and was able to write to his father as follows: "Truly the King shows an incredible anxiety that I should have everything that I desire, and everyone is astonished at the markedness of his favours in my regard, which

* Pérennès, vol. ii, l. vii, p. 351. See also Hamon.

is not usual with him and which he has never shown to anyone else. It is really quite evident that he takes pleasure in so doing."*

A letter, written from Paris during this month of November, turns our attention to an event which must have been a deep grief to Francis de Sales. This was the death of M. de Charmoisy, his cousin and the husband of the *Philothea* of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. M. de Charmoisy had been appointed by the Duke of Savoy as one of the members of the Cardinal's embassy, but he had fallen ill at Chambéry and had succumbed to his sickness on October 28. The news reached Francis either during the later stages of his journey or, more probably, when he had arrived in Paris, and he at once hastened to write to Mme. de Charmoisy.

"My mind is unable to keep its thoughts from you, my very dear cousin, my daughter, and would wish to do naught else but speak to you in whatever way it can; and yet it knows not what to say to you, being, like your own, still quite stunned, unless it be, dear daughter, that the divine Spouse of our souls wills that we should direct our affections towards eternity, where we shall all be joined together, never more to be separated. O my daughter, why is it that we ever place trust and confidence in the vanity of this passing life? Our ambitions lie beyond the earth, and thither we must therefore cast our love.

"In fine, my dear daughter, you are now undergoing the real test of that faithfulness which you owe to God, to whom you have so often resigned yourself in all the trials of life. My dear cousin, keep your heart in heaven and place the sacred crucifix upon your breast that it may still the sobbing of your heart. Give yourself entirely to him and believe me, He will give himself entirely to you.

"For myself, I cannot say *more than ever*, but, if I could do so, I would say that inseparably, more than ever, I am

"All yours, without condition or reserve,

"FRANC^S.,

"*B. of Geneva.*"†

On Sunday, December 2, 1618, Francis opened the preaching of the Advent Station in the church of St Andrew. It might have been thought that the disappointment, caused by his first sermon, would have diminished the numbers of his audience on subsequent occasions, but such was the attraction of his personality that once more the church was found crowded with people anxious to hear him, and even cardinals, bishops, and princes found it difficult to

* Mugnier, *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 446 *et seq.* The E. N. gives Oct. 12 for this interview: Tom. XVIII, note ii, p. 309.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXXXV, p. 311.

obtain places amongst the congregation. This time there was no disappointment, and thenceforth those who had heard him once, desired to listen to him again and again. For the sermons rang true. It was not merely an orator who was speaking, but a saint, and the people were so captured by his earnestness, by his knowledge of the vital religious truths, and by his deep insight into the needs of human nature, that his sermons seemed to them to be such as must have been preached in the early days of the Church by the Apostles themselves. Francis, for all his humility, could not but notice the enthusiasm of his hearers, and it was a matter of continual wonder to him that the people of the city should be so anxious to hear what he chose to consider as the unpolished utterances of a provincial bishop. "Are you not astonished," he said to a friend, "to see all these good Parisians coming to hear me—me, whose tongue is so awkward, whose ideas are so poor, whose sermons are so dull?"—"Do you think," answered the friend, "that it is fine words that they come to hear from you? It is enough for them to see you in the pulpit, your heart speaks to them through your eyes and your mouth: if they only saw you offering up a short prayer, they would be satisfied. Your simple language, burning with the fire of charity, goes straight to their hearts and moves them. There is something extraordinary in your sermons: everything gets home. Another man might say three times as much, and no attention would be paid to it. You have in you a certain rhetoric of Annecy, or rather of Paradise, which produces admirable effects."*

As a matter of fact, however, Francis was in reality a great orator. It is, of course, beyond dispute that the divine grace, which goes with the preaching of a saint, was the main cause of the wonderful conversions which he worked. But for all that we must not overlook his natural gifts, if we would obtain a true picture of his personality. He was by nature eloquent, and from his earliest years had studied, conscientiously and from the best motives, to improve his gift. This we know from the history of his student days and from the evidence of his famous letter on preaching. But, being a man of strong personality, he had not chosen to train himself in accordance with the elocutionary ideas of his time. He saw the faults of those ideas and deliberately discarded them. No man, probably, can altogether escape the influence of his surroundings, and there is much in the writings and preaching of Francis which is characteristic of his day. Yet it is none the less true that, on the whole, he broke away from tradition and chose his own method: he was wise enough and strong enough not to follow others slavishly. From the very first he resolved to abandon the elaborate and

* Hamon quotes Father Binet in *Quel est le meilleur gouvernement*, p. 193.

pretentious style of the early days of his youth: like the greatest writers and speakers, he aimed at simplicity. And in spite of the handicaps of his time, he achieved his aim. This is the very force of Father Binet's words: "Your simple language (vos paroles communes) . . . goes straight to their hearts and moves them. There is something extraordinary in your sermons: everything gets home. Another man might say three times as much and no attention would be paid to it." Moreover it must be remembered that Francis had a thorough knowledge of religious truth and an unerring insight into human nature: he had knowledge both from books and from experience. He was not a clever yet empty speaker—a mere juggler with words. He had material and he had ideas. Add to this, once more, his great power of illustration and his wonderful general knowledge outside the sphere of theology. Thus he had the three things which go so much to the making of an orator, strength of ideas, the force of simplicity, and a great power of illustration. It was probably his very originality that appealed to the jaded tastes of the Parisians, an originality not of manner, such as any mountebank might possess, but of mind and character. One may venture to suggest, without any disrespect to his sanctity, that, even though he had not been a saint, he would have filled the churches of Paris. We must not let his very humility blind us to his gifts, and, though he may talk of his awkward tongue, the poverty of his ideas, and the dulness of his sermons, we must recognize him for what he was, a saint indeed, but also one of the great church orators of his day.

Fortunately, on this point, we have the testimony of one who heard him preach, and who, being a man of education and taste, may be considered a good judge. This was the well-known grammarian, Vaugelas. "I have never known a preacher," he says, "who delighted and touched me so deeply as he did. I experienced an extraordinary pleasure in listening to him. To begin with, he had as his object the only real purpose of the preacher—the conversion of souls, towards which he laboured rather by way of the love of God than by that of the fear of hell. He displayed admirable judgement in his exact observation of the actual circumstances, whether of place, time, or the persons before whom he was preaching; he never said a word that had not its purpose, and the whole of his sermon was so judicious and so well arranged that, although I have a very poor memory, it would have been easy for me to remember all that he had said with a minimum of effort. His language was clear, vigorous, and persuasive, but especially did he excel in his selection of words, of which he made so exquisite a choice that it rendered him slow and deliberate in his delivery. He could not endure that artificial, over-decorated style which so many people

affect at the present day, and which many more people take in their delusion for real eloquence.

For the rest, his mind abounded with beautiful thoughts, and he was so fertile in conception that many great and well-read people have confessed that they never listened to his preaching without hearing things which were quite new to them, and which they had never before read in any book, or heard from any speaker. Yet these same thoughts were always perfectly judicious—never extravagant or far-fetched, but such as made appeal not only to the imagination but to calm reason itself."*

A letter, written about this very time to a sister of the Visitation, shows how much Francis depended on prayer for the real success of his sermons. He prayed for this intention himself: he asked the prayers of others. "Alas, my dear daughter, the envy which you bear me, does it indeed come from the fact that I am preaching to the world the praises of God? Truly it does sometimes bring great happiness to my heart to publish the goodness of him whom I love. But if you desire to preach with me, I beg you, my daughter, do so always by praying to God that he will give me words according to his heart and your desires. How many times it happens that we say good things because some good soul has obtained them for us by prayer! Does she not preach well? And with this advantage, that, knowing naught of it, she is not made vain thereby. We are like organs, for whom the person who blows really does the whole thing and never gets praised for it. Pray then often for me, my daughter, and you will preach along with me."†

As to his preaching in St Andrew's church during this Advent, it was so successful that the churchwardens desired to express their admiration and gratitude by presenting him with a magnificent service of plate in solid silver: Francis, however, would not depart from his usual rule, and refused, though very charmingly, to accept the gift.

In the meanwhile the negotiations with regard to the marriage were rapidly coming to a successful issue, not altogether without a certain amount of friction with regard to details. In these deliberations Francis played a not unimportant part, and it is said that at one time, when matters were strained almost to the breaking point, it was only his persuasiveness and patience that saved the situation. The Saint, as we know from his letters, had conceived a great admiration for Princess Christine. Speaking of this child of thirteen years of age, he says: "The elder" (of the two princesses) "is very accomplished and remarkable for the dignity and graciousness of her appearance. She is tall for her age, and in her bearing towards others displays an incomparable charm, combined with singular

* Vaugelas, as quoted by Hamon, vol. ii, p. 344.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDXCVIII, p. 335.

modesty and gravity. Her preacher, a man of great piety and a great friend of mine, tells me that she is very devout as regards religion, and is endowed with exquisite prudence and remarkable kindness of character."*

By the middle of December the marriage had become a practical certainty, though some of the details of the contract remained to be settled. On the 18th of the month Francis was able to write a letter of congratulation to Prince Victor Amadeus, in which he again expresses the very high opinion he had formed of Princess Christine.

" Amidst the general rejoicing throughout the whole of this kingdom at the successful arranging of Your Highness' wedding," says Francis, " I cannot and must not refrain from contributing my own small testimony, which is all the greater because on the one hand I am under obligation to Your Highness' goodness, and because on the other I have particularly noticed in Madame a very perfect union of perfections—in her countenance, her bearing, and her speech : indeed, we have remarked in her conduct so many instances of goodness, wisdom, gentleness, and piety, that it is impossible to discern which of these perfections of hers is most perfect. And because Scripture says : *Happy is the husband of a good wife*, I can from this very moment foretell every happiness for Your Highness in her regard, and bless our Lord therefor with all my heart. . . .

" Further, my Lord, I cannot describe the charm and graciousness with which my Lord the Cardinal bears himself in this court, and how aptly he combines the quality of a great prince, such as is his by birth, with that of a dignified Cardinal, which is his by his profession, uniting in the most admirable manner that frank and general courtesy, which is so desired and esteemed by this nation, with that modesty and decorum which are valued, not only here, but throughout the world.

" And so, my Lord, to God be honour and glory from all, with very humble thanksgiving for the consolations which he is giving and is still preparing to give to His Most Serene Highness (the Duke) and to yourself, of whom

" I am always, my Lord,

" The very humble, faithful, and obedient client and servant,

" Franˢ.,

" *Bp. of Geneva.*"†

In a letter written to Mme. de la Fléchère on December 18, 1618, we find an allusion to the founding of a Visitation convent in Paris : he had already mentioned this project in his letter to Donna Scaglia.

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXXXIV, p. 309.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDLXXXVIII, p. 315.

There is also an interesting permission given to his correspondent, which indicates his will as regards ladies who desired to live for a time in one of the houses of his institution. "I am almost overwhelmed here," he writes, "with business, all of it good, thanks be to our Lord. . . . Our good mother is doing well at Bourges. Here we are having a lot of trouble in effecting the establishment of our congregation, and I fear greatly that it will be delayed, although it is wonderful how many souls are anxious to join it. If for your consolation you wish to go and pass a few days at the Visitation, you can do so, provided that you do not go out of the house during that time."*

In a later letter he says: "I shall be here until Easter: and believe me, my dear daughter, that, since it must needs be, I remain here with a cheerful heart—a heart which, none the less, would be greatly pleased to find itself in our own small world in my own country. Yet it would be difficult to tell you how many examples of piety one sees here, even in the midst of the court. But, after all, I have not here my real work, nor my belovèd flock."†

On the eve of Christmas, after having celebrated Mass and given Communion to the Queen in the Church of the Capuchins, Francis preached before her and the whole Court. Alluding to the favour which was shown to him in Paris, he wrote to Mother de Chantal: "Do not imagine, my dear mother, that any favour of the court can hold me. How much more desirable it is to be poor in the house of God than to dwell in the great palaces of kings. I am undergoing my noviciate of court life, but, with the help of God, I shall never make my profession therein. On the eve of Christmas I preached before the Queen at the Capuchins, where she went to Holy Communion: but I assure you that I preached neither better nor more willingly before all these princes and princesses than I do in our poor little Visitation of Annecy."‡

About this time the Bishop wrote an interesting letter to Mother de Chastel, the Superioress of the Visitation convent at Grenoble, giving her some advice with regard to one of her novices, who had been the recipient of visions. The letter is all the more interesting because in this particular instance it became practically certain that these manifestations were genuinely supernatural: yet for the moment Francis was most decidedly on the side of prudence and suspicion.

"In all that I have seen of our Sister Marie Constance," he wrote, "I find nothing which makes me think that she is other than a very good child, and consequently that she must be loved and watched over with affectionate care. But as to her visions, revela-

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MCDLXXXIX, p. 316.

† *Ibid.*, p. 319. ‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDXCII, p. 320.

tions, and prophecies, they are infinitely suspect in my eyes, as being useless, vain, and unworthy of consideration. For, on the one hand, they are so frequent that their very frequency and great number make them matter for suspicion : on the other hand they are concerned with manifestations of certain things which God makes known very rarely, such as assurance of eternal salvation, confirmation in grace, the degree of several people's sanctity, and a hundred other similar things which are of no possible use at all. So much so that St Gregory, having been asked by one of the Empress' ladies, whose name was Gregoria, as to the state of her future salvation, was told by him : ' My daughter, you have asked me a thing which is both difficult and useless.'

" Now, to say that in the future we shall know why the revelations are made, is a pretext which he who makes them utilizes in order to escape blame for the uselessness of such things. More than this : when God wishes to make use of the revelations which he gives to creatures, he ordinarily forestalls them by veritable miracles or by a very special sanctity in those who receive them. Thus the evil spirit, when he particularly wishes to deceive any person, before inducing him to make false revelations, gives him to perform false prodigies and to lead a method of life that is spuriously holy."

Then the Bishop relates an instance of such an hallucination. " Notice, I beg you, my dear daughter," he continues, " the enemy's astuteness and cunning, and how worthy of suspicion are these extraordinary things. Nevertheless, as I have already told you, we must not on that account be harsh with this poor Sister, who, as I believe, has no other fault in this business than that of the useless amusement which she finds in these vain imaginations. The only thing is that you must show complete indifference and an utter contempt for all her revelations and visions, just as if she was relating dreams or the hallucinations of delirium, without giving her the satisfaction of refuting or fighting them : but, on the contrary, when she tries to talk about them, you must throw her off the track, that is to say, change the subject and talk to her about the solid virtues and perfections of the religious life, and particularly of the simplicity of the faith, by which the saints have ruled their lives, satisfied with a firm belief in the revelations of Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Apostles and of the Church, etc. . . .

" I had forgotten to mention that this girl's visions and revelations need not be considered as extraordinary, because the quick and susceptible imagination of girls makes them more liable to these illusions than men : that is why their sex is more given to belief in dreams, fear of ghosts, and indulgence in superstitions. They often

imagine that they see what they do not see, hear what they do not hear, and feel what they do not feel. . . ."*

All the time that Francis was in Paris he kept himself informed of the affairs of his diocese and directed them, as far as possible, by letter, when difficulties occurred beyond the power of the ordinary administration. At this time, for instance, we find him dealing with troubles in the country of Gex and lamenting the spirit of quarrelsomeness which prevailed amongst some of its clergy. "It is a very deep grief for me to see such a great lack of gentleness amongst the ecclesiastics of that district. But there is no remedy for it: the spirit of opposition finds entry everywhere, but especially where he knows that uniformity and conformity would give the greatest edification."†

There are several letters to Mother de Chantal at this period. She was still at Bourges, strengthening the new foundation in that town amidst unexpected difficulties. In addition to her anxiety for the Order, she found herself assailed by several family troubles, the chief of which was the rather tempestuous conduct of her son, the young Baron de Chantal. In each of his letters the Bishop has something to say on this point. On January 19 he wrote at considerable length, and there are several items of considerable interest.

"I have just come back rather late from the church of the Benedictines, where, thanks to God, I have received into the bosom of the Church an excellent gentleman, of good understanding and education. To-morrow I am preaching. . . .

"It will ever be my opinion that we ought always to receive into our congregation girls of delicate health, so long as the infirmity is not one of those expressly mentioned in the rules. The case of this girl, who has lost the use of her legs, is not such: for, even without legs, it is possible to perform all the essential exercises of the Rule —obey, pray, sing, keep silence, sew, eat, and, above all, be patient with the sisters who carry her about, when these are not ready and willing in doing this charity; for she must needs often put up with those who carry her, if they, in their turn, are not carried by the spirit of love. If, then, she had enough to support those who support her, I see nothing that should hinder her reception, unless it be her heart that is crippled. But, indeed, I love her, poor child, with all my heart. . . .

"You no longer have any doubt about our marriage, I am sure: for you will have learnt by now that the contract was solemnly ratified nine days ago, and that everything went off with the greatest success. The ambassadors have visited our dear little *Madame*, with the title of *Your Highness* and congratulations on her marriage: she

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDXCIV, p. 323.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCDXCV, p. 328.

is the best princess that it is possible to see. The King has written to the Prince of Piedmont with the title of brother-in-law. The King of Spain has sent word of his approval. In Piedmont and Savoy there were great rejoicings during Christmastide, when the Prince had received from Madame the colour of her favour or the favour of her colour ; and the Prince published a cartel of defiance for a general tourney, to which he invites the whole of Italy to come and see perish at his feet all those who shall declare that amaranth is not the fairest of all colours, that the Princess who favours this colour is not the worthiest that ever lived, and that the knight who is her slave is not the happiest in the world. But, indeed, I know not all the details of the story of this cartel ; also it is not altogether suitable matter for reading in the refectory. In fine, I mean to say that our marriage is a fact, and His Highness the Duke has never shown such signs of a real and surpassing joy as he does at present. The Prince will be here in three weeks. So much for that point.

" Baron de Chantal wellnigh made me lie when last I wrote to you, for he arrived almost immediately after I had despatched the letter. He at once began to get used to me, but he has not spoken about his affairs. I will use every effort to get him into the Prince's service and can think of nothing better for him. . . . Whoever can persuade him that gentleness and courtesy are incomparably more honorable than violence and pride will put him on the way to do wonders. As you know, my dear mother, the Prince's house is a monastery ; for nothing in the world will he tolerate disorder : and although, when he comes here, he may be willing to accommodate himself to the freedom of this country, he will yet insist that the freedom be virtuous. To conclude, I will do all in my power for the son of my dear mother, the brother of my dear sister and the nephew of such an uncle, who by the way has written to me about him. . . .*

" The stiffness which I have suffered in my legs is not painful, and does not hinder me from walking after the first ten or twelve steps. I think it only means that I am growing old. In fact, it is nothing, I assure you."†

In the meanwhile the Saint was everywhere in great demand as a preacher. Invitation succeeded invitation, and to none could he give a refusal. On one occasion when he had acceded to one of these requests, " a member of his household reminded him that several days before he had promised to preach in another church on the same day. ' Never mind,' he answered, ' God will give us

* *i.e.*, the son of Mère de Chantal, the brother of the dead Baroness de Thorens and the nephew of the Bishop of Bourges.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDIII, p. 345.

the power to multiply our bread, he is rich in mercy towards those who call upon him.' When it was represented to him that his friends were only thinking of his health, which might be affected by overwork; 'If God,' he answered, 'so strengthens our mind that we have always something to say, do you think he will neglect the body which is the organ that disseminates his doctrine? If we cast our care upon him, he will fortify, console, and strengthen us.' His friend replied that God did not forbid us to take care of our health. 'No,' rejoined the Saint, 'but he forbids us to mistrust his goodness.' Then, in order to put an end once and for all to the discussion, he added: 'I assure you that if I was asked for a third sermon on the same date, I would have less difficulty, whether in mind or body, in accepting it than in refusing. Nay, ought we not rather sacrifice body and soul for the sake of our neighbour whom our Lord loved so much that for very love he died for him?'"*

On another occasion when his friends protested that he was exhausting his strength, he answered that those who by their very office were the light of the world must needs, like torches, wear themselves away as they gave their light to others. Then someone used an argument which must have reminded the Saint of his beloved father's protest against the frequency of his sermons when he was Provost of Geneva: the argument was that Francis was making his sermons too common, and "that the word of God from his lips would lose its value, since the world only really esteemed that which was but rarely granted to it, that everyone rushed out to see a comet, though none got out of bed early in the morning to see the rising of the sun, which after all was a much more excellent luminary. 'Indeed,' answered the prelate, 'if I am to refuse all my invitations, you will have to appoint me a vicar for that task only. Nay, the very Word which I announce teaches that we are debtors to all, that we must not only lend, but give to all those who ask, and that true charity takes heed not of its own interests, but of those of God and the neighbour. How could I manage to disappoint and deny all those who ask me? Apart from the incivility of such a course, it would seem to me to be a great failure in brotherly love. How little do we resemble those two great saints, Moses and St Paul, of whom one willed to be struck off from the book of life for his brethren, and the other to be made anathema, which comes to the same thing." Another time he said: "What would you? I have a heart that cannot refuse. I would rather preach a sermon than say no."†

On January 3, 1619, Francis preached at St Sulpice on the feast of St Genevieve. On the Epiphany he preached in the church of St Mathurin on the beauty of the Church in its origin: he showed

* *Esprit*, Part XIV, Section 30. † *Esprit*, Part IV, Section 34.

how the mystery of the feast was one of vocation and offering, light and love ; and how each Communion that we make ought to be a new Epiphany, since, on receiving Jesus Christ, we ought to pay him homage as our King and renew our oath or fidelity. Eight days afterwards, preaching in the Madeleine, he took for his text these words : " He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." After the sermon a Protestant accosted him and complained that his text was not a suitable one for the occasion. " Nevertheless, Sir," answered the Saint, with a smile, " it was very applicable to you, since you are disobedient to the Church."* This quick retort *ad hominem* and the good humour with which it was delivered astonished and charmed the Calvinist : eventually he put himself under instruction and was received into the Church.

On the 17th of the month Francis preached a panegyric of St Anthony the Hermit, whom he had chosen as one of the guardians of his soul's solitude. " It is in this solitude," he would say, " that I remain in the presence of God, amidst the crowd of people and affairs that surround me. For, since this holy hermit was not distracted from his prayers by legions of devils, who are cleverer than any other beings in distracting our minds, how could I let myself be disturbed by men ? And since he sanctified himself in the midst of demons, surely we ought to be able to sanctify ourselves in the midst of Christians and religious people. We shall have no excuse then for not becoming saints."†

The next day Francis was visited by André Duval, Dean of the theological faculty of Paris and General of the French Carmelites. During this visit Father Duval asked the Bishop to hear his confession ; Francis, having granted his request, sought the same favour from the Carmelite. Each gave to the other the benefit of his spiritual advice, and they engaged upon a friendly alliance in their common work of saving souls. They devoted their efforts particularly to the conversion of Protestants, and when their united labours were crowned with success, there was a contest of humility such as might have been expected of two such men. Each one would ascribe all the merit of success to the learning and goodness of the other.

On January 20, the Bishop delivered the panegyric of St Sebastian in the church of Saint Jacques de la Boucherie. Alluding to the scroll fastened by order of the Emperor to the martyr's breast, in order to make known that he was a Christian, Francis showed how we ought all to carry the name of Jesus imprinted on our hearts in such a way that our actions and words should give

* Hamon quotes Mère de Chaugy.

† Hamon, vol. ii, p. 227, and Pérennès, l. vii, chap. 12, p. 354.

testimony to the Holy Name and reveal us as true disciples of our Lord. On February 4 we find our Saint preaching at the Oratory for the feast of Jesus our Saviour.

In the meanwhile preparations for the royal marriage were proceeding apace. The Prince of Piedmont, accompanied by his younger brother Thomas, had left Chambéry on January 29. They arrived at Lyons on February 1 and embarked on the Loire at Roanne, but, finding the boat too slow for them, they left it at Bony and journeyed on by post. They reached Paris on the evening of February 7. Everything was now ready and the marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the Louvre on February 10, before Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, Grand Almoner of France, assisted by the Bishop of Geneva. The next few days were given up to all kinds of festivities at the Court, immense sums of money being expended in accordance with the amazing prodigality of the times: even the penitential season of Lent seems to have been invaded, for we are told that the festivities went on till February 17.*

Our Saint had probably little to do with all this gaiety, except possibly for the more official celebrations immediately after the wedding: for on Ash Wednesday, which fell on the 13th, he opened the Lenten Station at Saint Andrée des Arts. Certainly on the 14th he was occupied in a very different manner. For he had been told by some kind person that a man, condemned to death for crime, was awaiting his fate in a state of callous despair. The man in question was a priest, who, having led an evil life, had at length fallen so low that under the rather Draconian law of those days he had received the capital sentence. Francis at once hastened to the prison, entered the man's cell, and, embracing him, urged him to have confidence in the mercy of God. The prisoner answered gloomily that it was useless—he was already the devil's prey and a victim of hell. "But," said Francis, "would you not rather be the prey of God and a victim of Christ's cross?"—"Of course I would," answered the criminal: "but how could God accept so horrible and corrupt a victim as myself?" The Bishop, silent for a few moments, had recourse to his usual weapon, and prayed in his heart for the help of God's grace. Then he returned to the attack. "But, in any case, would you not rather abandon yourself to God than to the Evil One?"—"Can you have any doubt of it?" retorted the other: "but what has God to do with a man like myself?"—"It was for men like yourself," was the answer, "that the Eternal Father sent his Son into the world—yes, and for others worse than yourself, such as Judas and those who killed our Lord. For Jesus Christ came to save sinners."—"Do you mean to tell me," said the prisoner, already shaken in his resolve, "that it would not be an insult against

* *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 451, and Hamon, vol. ii, p. 244.

God for a man such as I am to turn now and plead for his mercy?" —"I mean to say," answered Francis, "that it would be a greater insult to imagine that his mercy is not infinite and powerful enough to forgive any sin, not only actual, but imaginable, or that the redemption of Christ cannot overwhelm with grace even the multitude of evils caused by sin. On the contrary, his mercy, which is above all his works and ever surpasses his justice, rises to heights that overtop even the mountains of our crimes, the throne of his mercy being reared upon the very pedestal of our misery."—"But God is just," cried out the priest, "he must needs condemn me." —"He will pardon you," answered Francis, "if only you will implore his mercy: for he is compassionate, and has promised pardon to all that demand it with a contrite and humble heart."— "Very well," answered the other, "I give myself up to him; even to condemnation, if that be his will."—"Nay," corrected the Bishop, "say rather, with David, *I am thine: save thou me*." In the end the Saint had his way. He brought the unhappy man to repentance, heard his confession, and absolved him. Fully resigned to his fate, the convert offered up his terrible punishment, in union with the Passion of Jesus, as expiation for his sins. Almost his last words were a prayer of surrender to the conquering mercy of Christ.*

During the month of March the members of the embassy of Savoy were saddened by the death of one of their companions, Philibert Scaglia, Count of Verrua. Francis visited him often during his illness, as we learn from a letter to his daughter, Dona Ginevra, and gave him the last sacraments. "When the moment arrived to administer to him the Holy Viaticum," wrote Francis, "they were afraid of upsetting him, and asked me to speak to him about it. This I did and found that he was quite willing to receive it. And so, in order to satisfy his devotion and reverence, I gave it to him myself and then Extreme Unction. . . . So long as he retained the use of his senses, he gave signs that his mind was turned ever towards our Lord."†

After Lent was finished Francis continued to preach, whenever he was invited, in the different churches and chapels of Paris. Charles Auguste de Sales relates that some of his friends, having counted as accurately as possible the number of times he preached in the city, reckoned that the number of his sermons was equal to that of the days in the year. On the Tuesday in Easter Week he delivered the panegyric of St Francis de Paula in the church of the Minims, where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for the veneration of the faithful. After his introduction of the matter of his sermon and during the usual *Ave Maria* he noticed that the monstrance had

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 189 of vol. ii; and *Esprit*, Part III, Section 40.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDIX, p. 361.

not been veiled. For a short time he remained standing in silent recollection : then, seeing that no one grasped the meaning of his delay, he turned towards the sanctuary, and said gently : " I beg you, if you wish that I should preach, sitting here with my head covered, see first that my Master is covered before me." When the mistake was rectified he went on with his sermon.*

On Palm Sunday Francis had written to Mother de Chantal, who was still at Bourges, to come to Paris for the new foundation in the capital. She arrived on April 7, and at first took up her residence with five companions in a house, belonging to Mme. des Gouffiers, in the faubourg Saint Marceau. In a letter written to the Abbess of Port Royal on April 26 Francis says : " Mme. de Chantal is here with her little flock. On April 28 they will begin to chant the Office in public, having found more favour in the soul of Monsieur le Cardinal than was promised by first appearances."† This last sentence is an allusion to the prejudices instilled into the mind of Cardinal de Retz by the enemies of the Visitation, who had succeeded in putting many obstacles in the way of the foundation and giving much trouble to the Saint. The formal erection of the institution took place on May 1, when Francis said Mass and preached in the chapel. In a letter, written to Mother de Chantal on April 28, is an interesting allusion to Henriette d'Entragues. " I have already called," says the Saint, " on Mme. the Marchioness de Verneüil, whom I certainly like well, for she is, in my opinion, very frank."‡

Amongst other sermons there is a slight record left of one delivered on the Translation of St Nicholas, when Francis preached " with a talent and force so remarkable," says one who was present, " that during the whole of the sermon it seemed to us that we were transported into heaven."—" In his numerous instructions," writes M. Hamon, " the saintly preacher was not careless of eloquence, but nevertheless he was much more anxious to give good and solid doctrine to his hearers. Forgetful of himself, he thought only of the conversion of souls. Full of gentleness elsewhere, in the pulpit he was filled with zeal, animated with a holy anger against the world and its passions, calling sinners back to virtue, urging on the just to the practice of the gospel counsels, recommending especially Holy Communion and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which he called the fountain of all grace, the arsenal whence we must take arms, both defensive and offensive, for our struggle against the enemies of salvation."§

Not infrequently the Bishop, in his love of simplicity and self-

* Pérennès, vol. ii, l. vii, p. 355.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXIII, p. 370.

‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXIV, p. 371.

§ Hamon, vol. ii, p. 228.

denial, would refuse to make use of conveniences that might have increased his comfort, and he would playfully tease his companions when they grumbled at this procedure. One day, when he had been preaching at the Visitation, which was a long way from his house, he found, on leaving the convent, a magnificent carriage awaiting him. This had been sent to the door by a rich nobleman, who had given his servants orders to take the Bishop and his companions back to their lodging, a kindly thought prompted by the fact that the rain was pouring down in torrents and the badly paved streets were full of mud. Francis, however, was unwilling to return in this luxurious vehicle, and after refusing the offer with all kindness and courtesy, proceeded home on foot. A young priest of gentle family, who formed one of his suite, was much upset by the prospect of walking back in the rain and mud, and voiced his discontent in several grumbling remarks. Francis, amused rather than vexed, smilingly observed to his companions: "Look at M. l'Abbé: he still has a little vanity left in him."

Not only for his preaching, but for many other services and functions was Francis in great demand. Thus we find him at the beginning of the month of April administering the sacrament of Confirmation at the abbey of Maubuisson, and on the 28th consecrating the altar of St Symphorian in the church of Saint Germain des Prés. In a letter, from which we have already quoted, he supplies Mother de Chantal with an account of his doings on this date such as gives us an idea as to how his time was occupied. "Here," he says, "is the account of my day. Having passed the whole morning at Saint Germain and two hours in getting to my destination and in the pulpit, and an hour and a half with ladies who came to see me after the sermon, I sought out the good M. Berger, who will go and see the Vicar-General, in order to tell him what day you begin your work publicly and to obtain his approval."* Earlier in the year he had written to another correspondent: "If I have delayed writing to you, you must attribute it to this unendurable turmoil of affairs, in which I find myself obliged to do more than I am able or desirous, and must refrain from doing much that I would like to do and which would be within my power."† And so the work went on, diplomatic affairs, pontifical ceremonies, preaching, confessions, consultations, correspondence, the founding of the Paris Visitation, an unavoidable amount of social functions, and finally the interests of his distant diocese, of which he never altogether lost sight, however busy he might be. Great as the labour was, nevertheless it had its consolations. In the midst of the licence of Court life and the feverish activities of a great city he

* Lettre MDXIV, p. 371.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDII, p. 343.

found saintly characters and almost perfect lives that were known to only a few. He himself was able to assist many in their strivings after a higher life, and he had the happiness of bringing back numerous souls into the bosom of the Church.

One of the most notable of these conversions was that of a well-known soldier, a firm Calvinist, Governor of La Fère, in Picardy. During the course of a visit to Paris at this time he had fallen ill, and considerable anxiety was felt amongst his friends as to the outcome of his sickness. Four of his gentlemen, who happened to be Catholics and who were evidently much attached to him, were greatly worried by the fact that he was a Huguenot, and, deciding to see if the influence of Francis de Sales would effect his conversion to Catholicism, asked their patron if he would give an interview to the Bishop. The Calvinist, perfectly aware of their intentions towards him, but confident that nothing could shake his Protestant belief, agreed to their suggestion, and they immediately went off to Francis de Sales and begged him to come to their assistance. Francis consented to go with them. As soon as he was introduced to the Governor, the latter, with the straightforward and somewhat brusque manner that was habitual with him, remarked: "Well, Sir, and what have you come to do here? You are thinking of converting me to your religion? If you manage to do that, you will work a bigger miracle than ever St Peter did." Francis answered smilingly: "Sir, you do not know what God has in store for you." In a short time they were dealing with the religious questions of the day. For the most part, it would seem, the invalid was content to listen to all that his visitor had to say, and, when their interview was drawing to a close, plainly showed that he was reserving his judgement. "Sir," he said, "all this sounds very well. I am not capable enough to answer it all, nor am I in a fit condition to do so. But give me a week's grace. I will discuss everything with M. du Moulin, and, if you are agreeable, will arrange a meeting between the two of you, when the whole matter can be thrashed out before me."—"Certainly, Sir," answered the Bishop, "I am quite satisfied with that arrangement. Fix the date and the hour, and, provided that I am warned in time, I will not fail to come." Thereupon the Governor sent for Pierre du Moulin, the minister of Charanton, related to him what had taken place, repeated the Catholic arguments which had been presented by Francis, and invited Du Moulin to meet the latter in a disputation. To his surprise, the minister demurred and showed clearly that he was very unwilling to engage with such a formidable opponent as the Bishop of Geneva. The Governor did his best to overcome the distrust and timidity of his champion begging him to come to the meeting, taunting him with cowardice, and protesting earnestly that Du Moulin would answer for his soul

at the day of judgement. Four times during the week the sick man sent for the minister and used every endeavour to overcome the latter's refusal. It was useless. Eventually the Bishop, having been once more visited by the four Catholic gentlemen, returned with them at the hour fixed for the meeting. "Well, Sir," said Francis, as he stood before the Governor, "what have you settled these last few days about our business? Has M. du Moulin come?" The Governor's answer was a bitter complaint against the Huguenot ministers, whom he now roundly accused of having deceived him for fifty years. "Ah," he said, "I spoke forcibly to Du Moulin. But, since he refuses to come and dispute with you, it is very evident that he thinks his cause is none too good. Consequently, Sir, I now ask that you will be good enough to instruct me in the Catholic religion: for I am ready to abjure that of Calvin." Francis, with his hands joined and his eyes lifted towards heaven, uttered a brief prayer of thanksgiving, and then proceeded with the desired instruction. In due course the Governor was received into the Church, and, having recovered his health—which, with his conversion, he ascribed to the Bishop's prayers—returned to Picardy. Here he not only persevered in the faith, but was instrumental in obtaining the conversion of the whole of his family.*

A similar conversion was effected in the house of Mme. de Montigny, who happened to be a relative of the Bishop. This lady asked him to have an interview with a certain nobleman, who now for some years had become a Calvinist. Francis consented and remained in the room, chatting with the people who happened to have called on that occasion. At the end of half an hour the nobleman in question appeared. As soon as he was seated, Francis turned to his hostess and said: "Madame, if I were sure that this is the gentleman about whom we were talking, I would beg him to put forward his doubts and difficulties in connection with our faith." The gentleman, hearing these words, rose from his chair and bowed to the Bishop, saying: "Yes, Sir, I am the one; and, to put the matter briefly, if you can prove to me that there is a purgatory, I will immediately become a Catholic."—"Then, Sir," replied Francis, "I must ask you to be very patient and to give me a hearing: for I hope, with the grace of God, to satisfy you perfectly on that point." Then he sent for his Bible, which his valet, Germain Pilliod, always carried about with him in a bag made especially for the purpose. Taking the book, he proceeded to read the passages which prove the various points of this doctrine, comparing them one with the other, demonstrating, where necessary, their authenticity, and bringing out their full force. The discussion was lengthy, but at the end the nobleman confessed that he was convinced, and

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 185 of vol. ii. *Année*, Feb. 13.

declared that he would take the necessary steps to effect his reconciliation with the Church, a promise which he afterwards fulfilled.*

Another Calvinist, who doubtless prided himself upon his powers as a theologian, was anxious to ascertain for himself whether the Bishop of Geneva was as learned as his reputation made him. Consequently he one day engaged the latter in disputation. Not only did Francis defend his faith successfully, but he carried the attack into his opponent's territory and secured a signal victory. This man also became a Catholic.†

On another occasion, the Bishop proved that he was as well versed in philosophy as he was in revealed theology. A certain gentleman, who had once been a Huguenot, had passed, not altogether illogically perhaps, from the harsh doctrines of Calvinism to the profession of atheism pure and simple. One day, meeting Francis de Sales by chance, he asked the latter contemptuously if there could possibly be a God and what exactly was faith. The Bishop, taking no notice of the man's sarcasm, took up the challenge at once. He demonstrated by purely philosophical arguments that everything which we see in the universe argues the existence of a first and infinite being : then he proved the necessity of faith in God, in Jesus Christ and finally in his Church. So convincing were his arguments, so moving was his eloquence, that the atheist, who had been so scornful, burst into tears, admitted his error, and prepared himself humbly for admission into the Church, of which he ever remained a loyal subject.‡

" Not only," says M. Hamon, " did the Bishop of Geneva go and visit those to whom he could be of use, but, whenever he was in his room, he insisted on receiving all who came to him, even those who were troublesome and importunate as well as his own charming friends and intimates. He welcomed all with cheerfulness and affability, never showing any trace of weariness or boredom ; paying attention to petty matters as if he had naught to do with great, and to important affairs as if he had never been occupied with small ; listening with pleasure, and undertaking to answer with confidence ; adapting himself to everyone without any sign of condescendence ; and allowing all to give full play to their individual powers of mind without ever thrusting upon them the superiority of his own." §

Mgr. Camus describes an interview, the story of which was related to him by the Saint. A Huguenot gentleman called at the house and asked to see Francis. He was at once introduced by the servant into the latter's apartment. As soon as he had entered the room, and without any kind of greeting or salute, he brusquely demanded :

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 187 of vol. ii. † *Ibid*, p. 188.

‡ *Ibid*. Hamon quotes François Favre, who was present.

§ Hamon, vol. ii, p. 233.

"Are you the one who is called the Bishop of Geneva?" Francis, divining that there might be trouble, glanced hurriedly at those who were with him, to see if among them was a certain member of his suite, whose temper was as keen as his loyalty, and who was likely to resent in a practical fashion the rudeness of this stranger. Relieved to notice the absence of this gentleman, Francis turned again to his visitor and replied: "I am so called, Sir, although indeed I am not allowed much access to that city: nevertheless I am fairly well known in the rest of the diocese which is committed to my charge." Then, to the surprise of the Bishop, the Calvinist said: "I would like to know from you, Sir, whom people everywhere describe as an apostolic man, whether the Apostles went about in carriages." Francis, quickly recovering from his astonishment, replied that they did indeed make use of carriages when there was opportunity and reason for so doing. On hearing this, the gentleman nodded his head, and answered: "I would very much like to see you prove that from Scripture." Francis immediately quoted the incident, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, during which St Philip the deacon entered the chariot of the Queen's eunuch, when that official invited him to do so. Passing over the fact that this St Philip, although of apostolic times, was not, strictly speaking, an apostle, the objector retorted: "The carriage did not belong to him, but to the eunuch who invited him to enter it."—"I did not say that the carriage belonged to him," answered Francis, "but only that, when occasion arose, they made use of carriages."—"Ah, but what you do not read," said the other, "is that they rode in carriages, decorated with gold, tapestried, and so luxurious that the King has no better; moreover, they were not harnessed to the finest of horses nor driven by coachmen in splendid liveries. And it is just that which scandalizes me in you, who play the saint and whom the Papists hold for such. Fine saints, indeed, who go to heaven so very much at their ease!"—"Alas, Sir," replied the Bishop, "the people of Geneva, who withhold from me the revenues of my bishopric, have cut the grass so close and have put the manger so far out of my reach that it is all I can do to live humbly and poorly upon what is left to me. As to a carriage, I have never had one of my own, nor even the means to keep one."—"I am to understand then," said the gentleman, "that the majestic and magnificent carriage, in which I see you every day going through the town, does not belong to you?"—"No, certainly," answered Francis, "and you are quite right in calling it majestic, because it belongs to His Majesty. It is one of several which the King has ordered for those who, like myself, are attached to the suite of the Princes of Savoy. You can see this yourself by the royal livery worn by the man who drives it."—"Really," conceded the Calvinist, "I am

pleased to hear this, and I like you for it the more. I see that you are right, and that you yourself are a man of humble mind. So, then, you are poor, I understand, since you belong to the retinue of these gentlemen."—" I do not complain of poverty," replied the Saint, " since I have enough to enable me to live decently and without overabundance. Even were I to feel the pinch, I should be wrong to complain of that which Jesus Christ chose as his lot during the whole of his existence, he who lived and died in the arms of poverty. For the rest, as the house, which gave me birth, was subject to the House of Savoy, I hold it an honour to accompany the Cardinal of Savoy during this journey and to be present at the celebration of the alliance which his brother, the Prince of Piedmont, is contracting with France by marrying His Majesty's sister." Brusque and domineering as was the spirit of the Huguenot gentleman, he was completely won over to Francis during this visit, and, before he left, expressed his admiration and satisfaction in the same outspoken manner that he had used in the voicing of his complaints.*

On another occasion a German gentleman, of much the same stamp, came to see the Bishop. This was Philip Jacob, who had formerly been a minister in the Rhenish Palatinate, but who a short time before this had become a Catholic. He was not, however, satisfied with his position, and in the present instance seemed inclined to vent his discontent upon Francis de Sales. As soon as he was seated, he turned to the Bishop and said : " Well, Sir, what are you doing here ? " Taking no notice of the impertinence, Francis answered mildly that he had come in the interests of peace. " But your flock," asked the former minister, " what is happening to them while you are absent ? "—" Before I parted from them," was the answer, " I committed them to the care of capable men—I would even say of men more capable than myself—who will have charge over them and will look after them until I return."—" The residence of bishops," pursued the other, " is it of human law or divine ? "—" Speaking generally," replied Francis, " I consider that it is a matter of divine law."—" And the bishops of to-day," demanded M. Jacob, " are they bishops like those of the primitive church ? "—" Yes," said the Saint, " for they have the same power and the same dignity."—" And these bishops," went on the inquisitor, " can they perform miracles like St Peter ? "—" Even if the bishops of to-day were but the shadow of St Peter," replied Francis, " yet even so the shadow of St Peter would always work miracles." And so it went on, question and answer, for the space of two hours. Then, at last, M. Jacob expressed himself satisfied and thanked the Bishop for his patience. " It was only a short time ago," he said, " that I professed the Roman faith and religion, and these difficulties

* *Esprit*, Part I, Section 26.

had persisted in my mind. Now, indeed, I fully realize that God loves me, for he has granted me the grace to meet you, who are so gentle and kindly. You have utterly driven away the darkness of my soul and broken the bonds in which I was caught and entangled. For I assure you, Sir, that if you had treated me otherwise, I would have gone off to Charanton to-morrow, in order to renounce the religion which I had professed."*

"This," says M. Hamon, "was not the last time that this man had occasion to bless God for a meeting with Francis: for, having afterwards made a journey into Italy, and having returned, with his wife, from that country in the greatest poverty, he came to Annecy and sought out the Saint, who for six weeks paid his expenses at his hotel and gave him on his departure a considerable sum of money."†

Amongst the notable men of the day who sought the friendship of our Saint were the Jesuit, Father Suffren, confessor to Louis XIII and Marie de Medicis, and M. Bourdoise, Founder of the community of St Nicholas de Chardonnet. The former was a man of deep piety and learning, whom Francis admired greatly, and whom he urged to compose for the faithful a kind of spiritual breviary, in which they would find for each day, week, month, and season of the year devotional practices for the continual growth of holiness within their souls: it was greatly due to Francis that the Jesuit father produced his work, entitled *The Christian Year*, "an excellent book," says Hamon, "with which no fault can be found except that its style is somewhat out of date." M. Bourdoise, on the other hand, was rather a man of action: he was an ardent reformer of the clergy, consumed by zeal for ecclesiastical discipline, unable to tolerate in a priest anything that was not perfectly regular, and always ready to fight uncompromisingly against whatever was wrong, in whomsoever he might find it. Anxious to make the acquaintance of one who exemplified in his own person the ideal of the priesthood, M. Bourdoise composed a long letter to Francis and brought it himself to the Hotel d'Ancre. The burden of the letter was that, so long as the clergy and laity were not better educated and directed, even the Bishop's sermons would produce but little fruit. Francis read this letter twice through with every care and then discussed its subject for an hour with the writer, who kept on insisting on the need for the reformation of the clergy. "It is an extraordinary thing," he said, "that nobody even thinks of it." As a matter of fact, this was an exaggeration, even if it alluded to Paris alone; for several people were devoting much attention to the matter, notably, at the very moment, M. de Bérulle. It was, however, true that up to then there were no seminaries for the proper education of young ecclesiastics: priests entered upon their duties not, indeed, without

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 191 of vol. ii. † Hamon, vol. ii, p. 235.

any preparation at all, but certainly without any systematized course or any such regular discipline as is afforded by seminary training. The result was that those who were fit to be priests were not suitably educated, and that many who had no real vocation at all managed to obtain ordination. M. Bourdoise, with his outspoken fearlessness, attacked the Bishop for his foundation of the Visitation, when his energy and time might, in the speaker's opinion, have been better spent elsewhere. "I am surprised," he said, "that a Bishop, to whom God has given such great talents, does not employ them in forming good priests, but gives himself up almost entirely to the guidance of women." In reply to this reproach two different answers are put into the Bishop's mouth by his biographers and others. One answer, given perhaps on this occasion, but quite possibly on another, is related by Mgr. Camus. "It is not for me," said Francis, "to undertake so important a work: goldsmiths must handle precious metal and the potter his clay." Then he gives a long defence of women in relation to religion generally, of their importance in Christ's scheme, of the value of women's orders, and finally of the merits of his own institution, the Visitation. He ends with these words: "As to your exhortation that I should bethink me of forming a congregation of ecclesiastics, do you not see that such an institution has already been formed by that great and faithful servant of God, M. de Bérulle, who has plenty of talent for the work and much more leisure than have I, who am burdened with such a difficult diocese—a diocese in which lies the very source of the errors that are troubling the whole Church. For the rest, let us leave to great workmen the accomplishment of great tasks: and as to my poor sermons, God will do therewith what seems to him best."*

"Such," says M. Hamon, in a note, "is the reply which M. de Belley puts into the mouth of the saintly Bishop: it seems to us much more probable and more in harmony with the Saint's humble and charitable spirit than that which is related in the life of M. Bourdoise. The latter makes Francis say that, after having worked for seventeen years in forming only three priests such as he desired them to be, he had only been able to form one and a half, and that he had not thought of the Daughters of the Visitation until he had given up all hope of success with ecclesiastics." Let us note at once, as we shall see later, that M. Hamon has failed to quote the *Life of M. Bourdoise* with historical exactitude; he goes on, however, to say: "This reply contains several inaccuracies: (1) St Francis of Sales thought of the Daughters of the Visitation from the very beginning of his episcopacy, and God revealed to him the institution of this Order as early as 1603, before the Lenten Station in

* *Esprit*, Part X, Section 14.

Dijon ; (2) he laboured during all his life at the task of forming a good clergy in his diocese, and even had the intention of creating a congregation of ecclesiastics, which project he only abandoned when he saw the beginnings of that of M. de Bérulle, with whom indeed he desired to associate himself. It is not true, then, that he had lost all hope of forming good priests, and that he had only thought of the Daughters of the Visitation after seventeen years of useless efforts with the clergy. This reply, then, is only one of those biting sarcasms so frequent in the mouth of M. Bourdoise, or one of those inaccurate recollections which the historian travesties according to his own particular impressions."*

Dom Mackey, however, gives us another explanation of the problem. After giving the story of M. Bourdoise's visit and complaint, he says : " The Saint is represented as answering that he had turned to his work for women only after losing all hope of reforming ecclesiastics, adding that ' he had been seventeen years trying to form good priests *to aid him in this work of reform*, and had succeeded only in forming one and a half.' M. Hamon and others who have quoted this passage make it still more objectionable by suppressing the words in italics, which alone preserve any semblance of possibility for the fact related. It seems to us that the grain of truth contained in the extravagant phrase attributed to our Saint is this, that Bourdoise was referring to the establishment of the common life of the clergy, which he considered an essential and primary point in reform, and that the Saint spoke of the failure of his efforts *in that direction* without committing himself to Bourdoise's general principle. And as a fact (we learn it from a newly discovered document), the Saint had been on the point of establishing a system of common life with two of his clergy at the time when his unforeseen death prevented this scheme."†

In reality, M. Bourdoise had a great admiration for Francis de Sales, which increased as the days went by. He invited him to visit St Nicholas du Chardonnet, where conferences were given each week to the clergy on the virtues and obligations of the ecclesiastical state : and the Bishop, delighted to accept these invitations, would often go and see M. Bourdoise, visited the members of the community in their rooms, and assisted at their conferences. Often he would invite the good priest to accompany him when he went preaching, and delighted to show every mark of respect both for his community and himself. One day Cardinal de Retz complained in the Saint's presence that M. Bourdoise occasioned a good deal of talk by the ardour of his zeal, which was at times somewhat wanting

* Hamon, vol. ii, note on p. 238.

† Note vi, p. 463, *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Nov., 1898, in article " St Francis de Sales and the Formation of the Clergy."

in prudence. "Believe me, Monseigneur," answered Francis de Sales, "we have never yet heard that anyone has been damned for being too zealous for the re-establishment of ecclesiastical discipline."

But it was with St Vincent de Paul that Francis contracted the closest of friendships during these days of his sojourn in Paris. These two great souls, both of whom possessed in an extraordinary degree the gift of reading character, were drawn towards each other by an irresistible impulse. St Vincent used to say that the characteristics of the Bishop of Geneva—his gentleness, dignity, modesty—formed a living representation to him of our Lord Jesus Christ conversing amongst men: Francis on his side spoke of Vincent de Paul as *the holy priest*, and on every occasion praised his deep piety, his wisdom, and his rare talents in the guidance of souls. No greater proof of our Saint's admiration for Vincent could be given than the fact that he made him spiritual director of the Visitation convent of Paris: for Francis always maintained that to obtain a good director it was necessary to choose one out of thousands, that there were very few who were really capable of this difficult task, and that the direction of a religious house demands great virtue combined with much learning and experience. This was particularly true of those days, when, as we have seen, the education of the clergy and even of the religious orders was in such an incomplete and unsystematic condition. The French capital was, of course, more fortunate than most other places in this matter, for it possessed at the time many men, eminent for their wisdom and noted for their gifts in the guidance of souls; consequently our prelate's choice of Vincent as spiritual superior to his daughters was the highest compliment that could be paid. So anxious was Francis that his friend should undertake this work and so afraid lest in the midst of many occupations the latter should feel constrained to refuse it, that he prevailed upon Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris, to place Vincent under obedience in this matter and so make a refusal impossible. St Vincent de Paul obeyed this command, and for many years governed the convent of the Visitation with a prudence which is recorded in the lessons of the Breviary read on his feast day. "He was made Superior of the Nuns of the Visitation by St Francis de Sales," says the fourth lesson, "and discharged this duty for about forty years, with a wisdom which so approved itself to the judgement of their Holy Founder, that he was used to say he knew no worthier priest than Vincent."*

Another person with whom Francis had much to do at this time was the celebrated Abbess of Port Royal, Mother Angélique Arnauld. The history of this lady reveals several of the abuses to which conventual life was then exposed and which resulted in so many spiritual

* The Roman Breviary, July 19, Marquess of Bute's translation, p. 949.

catastrophes. To please her grandfather, she had consented to become a religious, but only on condition that she was made an abbess: as she was then only eight years old, she can hardly be blamed for this. Her ambition was fulfilled, by means of fraud on the part of her relatives, three years later, when she was appointed coadjutrix to the Abbess of Port Royal. Although professedly a nun, she was brought up in liberty, luxury, and idleness, having her own will in all things and unrestrained by any discipline. In the year 1608, on the occasion of a sermon preached by a Franciscan, she entered upon a period of conversion. Thoroughly reforming her own life, this strong-willed girl of seventeen then went on to reform the convent over which she had charge, and it speaks well for her capabilities that, in spite of much opposition, she succeeded in her work. At the time when Francis came to Paris she had gone for a time to the abbey of Maubuisson, in order to perform the same task in that house. "Naturally proud," says M. Hamon, "and inclined moreover to think too well of herself by the precocious fame that surrounded her, yet fearing to deceive herself if left to her own guidance, she invited the saintly Bishop to visit her house. He acceded to her request. From the very first interview he took possession of her soul, and, while approving of her projects, governed her with a firmness which she had never hitherto experienced. The thought of the great usefulness, likely to result from the training of such an excellent personality, took him back often to Maubuisson; and on one occasion he remained there for nine days in order to assist in the work of reform by means of his preaching and advice. For the Abbess and her community these were days of spiritual prosperity and happiness: she never wearied of admiring the Saint." We are told by Charles Auguste de Sales that she treated as relics the objects he had made use of during his stay at the convent, and many of these were afterwards set on one side and treasured as sacred mementos. Having placed herself under his spiritual guidance, she for a time entertained the idea of resigning her position as Abbess and entering the Visitation Order as a simple nun. The Bishop, however, would never agree to this: the signs of her vocation to the life of his own institution were too doubtful, and he felt that it would entail great risks both for herself and for others. He consented to continue the direction of her religious life, and, as interviews were not possible, they carried on a correspondence, in which she on the one hand exposed to him her temptations and shortcomings, and he on the other strove to provide the remedies for her failings and reveal to her the dangers of her complex character. In these letters it is quite evident that she dealt with herself most candidly, and he, using the knowledge thus given to him and exercising his own wonderful powers of diagnosing the state of souls,

answered her with equal candour in pointing out her defects. He saw that the root evil of her character was pride. "Tell that dear daughter" (that is to say, Mother Angélique herself, for he often wrote to her of herself in the third person), "tell her that during her morning exercise she must fill her heart with the spirit of humility, gentleness, and tranquillity, and must renew this disposition after the midday meal, at Vespers and in the evening, and that throughout the day she must remember I told her to do so."*

Again: "Continually vivify your courage with humility—that is to say, your feebleness and your desire to be humble, vivify these with confidence in God, so that your courage be humble and your humility courageous."†

"Be careful, my dear daughter, about that expression *fool* and remember the words of our Lord about it. . . . Little by little tone down the vivacity of your spirit to patience, gentleness, humility, and kindness amidst the silliness, childishness, and feminine imperfections of those sisters who are sensitive about themselves and inclined to pester the ears of their mothers."‡

Francis detected in Mother Angélique that spirit of gloominess, sternness, and inclination to excessive austerity, which afterwards made her such an easy victim to Jansenism. "Inspire the whole of your conversation, both inwardly and outwardly, with sincerity, gentleness, and joy, according to the Apostle's counsel: *Rejoice in the Lord always: again, I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men.*"

Speaking of a book he was sending to her, he said: "If the author seems to you to lay little stress on the holy gladness that I recommend so strongly to you, notice that it is not his intention to decry it, but only that this joy should be grave and serious, as it ought indeed to be. And when I speak of gravity, I do not mean sadness, nor affectation, nor gloom, nor disdain, nor pride, but that which is holy and charitable. . . .

"Do not overburden yourself with watchings and austerities (and believe me, my dear daughter, I know well what I am saying on this point), but journey towards the Port Royal of the religious life along the royal road of charity towards God and your neighbour, of humility and of gentleness."§

In another letter he says: "As to the thought, or rather the temptation, of sadness arising from the fear that your present fervour and application will not last, remind yourself once and for all that those who trust in God will never be confounded."‖

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDLXXIX, p. 15.
† Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXIV, p. 389.
‡ Tom. XIX, Lettre MDL, p. 15.
§ Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXIV, p. 389. ‖ Lettre MDL, p. 15.

In one of his later letters he indicates another of her troubles. "With regard to what you have written to me in three of your letters, my dear daughter, I still remain perfectly confident that the daughter whom I have so strongly recommended to you" (i.e. Mother Angélique herself), "and whom in truth I love as I love my own soul, will succeed in becoming a great servant of God: for her faults are not deliberate nor do they come from any desire within her to foster those peevish, vain, and somewhat rebellious inclinations. Now, that being so, there is nothing to fear. Her natural impulsiveness is the cause of all her trouble, for it sets in motion her sensitiveness, and her sensitiveness reacts upon her impulsiveness. Therefore you will tell her from me that her principal care should be to hold her spirit in moderation, gentleness, and tranquillity, and that for this purpose she should even calm down her external actions—her bearing, her step, the expression of her features, the movements of her hands, and especially her tongue and her speech. Moreover, she must not be astonished if this is not accomplished all in a moment. . . . But, look you, my dear daughter, you are somewhat hard upon the poor child. You must not reproach her so bitterly, for she is full of good intentions."*

He had already given the same advice in a former letter: "Accustom yourself a little to speaking calmly, to walking about calmly, to doing all you have to do gently and calmly: and you will see that in three or four years you will have completely mastered this abrupt impulsiveness. . . . Now I know well that, in the midst of it all, you will make numberless slips every day and that that ardent nature of yours will always burst forth: but this does not worry me, provided that it be not your will and deliberate intention, and that always, when you become conscious of these feelings, you do your best to quiet them."†

A few months' experience of the Saint's teaching effected a great change in the soul of Mother Angélique, opening up horizons hitherto unknown and preparing the way for further progress. Unfortunately, the hopes thus conceived were never realized. When St Francis died, the Abbess fell completely under the influence of the Abbot of Saint Cyran, and she, her sisters, and her community passed gradually but irretrievably into the camp of the new heresy. Port Royal became the fortress of Jansenism.

There is reason to believe that Francis had a premonition of this event. While Mother Angélique was at Maubuisson, she placed Port Royal under the command of her sister, Agnes. She had made the Bishop promise that he would visit this house. In fulfilment of his word, he accepted an invitation to preach to the community. But the sermon was interrupted by a strange incident, for Francis

* Lettre MDCXLVI, p. 195. † Lettre MDCIV, p. 125.

suddenly stopped, remained silent for a time, and then burst into tears. When the Abbess asked him afterwards the cause of his grief, he answered sadly: "It was because God has revealed to me that your house will lose the faith. The only means of preserving it is obedience to the Holy See."*

"All these labours," says M. Hamon, "were but a part of Francis' occupations during his stay in Paris. Here he presided at the holding of theological or philosophical debates, or gave consultations, either to theologians who asked him for a solution of their difficulties, or to bishops, who listened to him as to a doctor of the Church and venerated him as their father: there, he preached perfection to religious communities, comforted the poor with alms or the sorrowful with consolation, put an end to family lawsuits, assisted at any assembly which had for its object the interests of religion or charity, and, as only means of recreation in the midst of these labours, went to hospitals and private houses to console the sick and absolve the dying. Thus, having learned that one of his priests, who happened to be in Paris, had been attacked by a contagious disease, he twice visited the sick man and every day sent for news of his health until all danger was passed."†

On June 11, 1619, a noble lady, the Countess of Saint Paul, asked the Bishop to give a conference on St Barnabas that afternoon in the chapel of the Visitation to a number of ladies, for it happened that she had a great devotion to the saint of the day. Francis, although he had wished to go elsewhere at that particular time, granted her request, and, without preparation, preached a sermon on St Barnabas, at the end of which he suggested the following points: that it is not good to be too obstinate in our own opinions; that we must not be astonished if, in our weakness, we fall from time to time, but that we must pick ourselves up promptly and strive to make our falls less frequent; and that, finally, we must have a great reverence for the mercy of God, who is able to advance his own glory and our well-being even from our misery and faults. At the end of the sermon several of the ladies put to him their difficulties and doubts, and they were so eager in their search for knowledge that they all talked at once. When the Bishop found an opening of silence in this chorus, he said: "I will reply to all your questions if you will be so good as to give me the answer to this one: in the midst of a number of people, all of whom are talking and none listening, what is there, in your opinion, to be said?" Having thus obtained silence, he smilingly remarked: "And now, if you please, which of you shall I answer first?" Then he proceeded to satisfy the needs of these good ladies in turn, and did it with so

* Hamon quotes letter to Sister Marie Duplessis of the Visitation.

† Vol. ii, p. 242.

much clearness and wisdom that Mme. de St. Paul, on taking leave of Mother de Chantal, said to the latter: "In truth, reverend mother, there is a greater than Solomon here!"*

In the early summer Francis went to Orleans where he stayed with Mgr. de l'Aubépine, whom he had known for many years. He preached in several churches, administered the sacrament of Confirmation, visited the Carmelites, and also the Jesuit college, at which he obtained a holiday for the students. It was during this visit that he conceived the idea of founding a Visitation convent in that city.†

In answer to a gentleman, who had sent him one of De Mornay's books, Francis wrote an interesting letter, dated July 2, 1619, on the interpretation of Scripture. "It is very true," he says, "the Scriptures contain with great clearness the doctrine necessary for your salvation, and I have never thought otherwise. It is also true that it is a very good method of interpreting Scripture to compare one passage with another and adjust the whole to the analogy of the faith: and that also I have always said. But, nevertheless, I have always strongly believed and have continually said that, notwithstanding this admirable and beautiful clearness of Scripture in the things necessary for salvation, the human mind does not always find its true meaning, but can err, and, as a matter of fact, does err very frequently in its understanding of passages that are the clearest and most necessary for the establishment of the faith: witness the Lutheran errors and the Calvinist books, which under the guidance of the fathers of the so-called Reformation, remain in a state of irreconcilable antagonism on the meaning of the words of the Eucharistic institution; both these parties boast that they have carefully and faithfully examined the sense of these words by means of comparison with other Scripture passages and have adjusted the whole to the analogy of the faith, and yet they nevertheless remain in contradiction with each other in the understanding of such very important words.

"Scripture then is clear in its words: but the mind of man is darkened, and, like an owl, cannot endure the bright light. The method mentioned is good enough, but the human mind knows not how to use it. It was the Spirit of God, Sir, that gave us the Scriptures, and it is the same Spirit which gives their true sense, and gives it only to his Church, *the pillar and ground of the truth;* the Church, by the ministry of which this Divine Spirit guards and maintains its truth, that is to say, the true sense of his word; the Church, in fine, which alone has the infallible assistance of the Spirit of Truth, in order to find truth in the word of God correctly,

* *Année*, June 11. *Esprit*, Part III, Section 13.

† Hamon, vol. ii, p. 243.

appositely, and infallibly. So much so that whoever seeks the truth of this heavenly word outside the Church, which is the guardian thereof, will never find it ; and whoever strives to find it otherwise than through her ministry will espouse not truth but vanity ; and instead of the sure clarity of the sacred word, will follow the illusions of that false spirit, who *transforms himself into an angel of light. . . .*"*

About July 8 we get an inkling, in one of his letters to Mother de Chantal, that all is not well with his health.† Nevertheless he continued his work. On the 9th he preached at the Visitation and gave the habit to six postulants. " Alas," wrote Mother de Chantal, " that good and very dear father is quite ill."‡

On July 9 he wrote to Prince Victor Amadeus, in support of the Duke of Nemours, whose financial affairs were in their usual parlous condition and who was asking for the payment of certain sums of money which apparently had been promised by the Duke of Savoy at the time of the signing of peace.§. On July 31 Francis was engaged to preach the panegyric of St Ignatius Loyola at the Jesuit church : but his sickness returned, and this time so severely that he was obliged to countermand all his engagements for several days. There is reason to believe that for a time he was in serious danger. One result of this illness, however, was a remarkable demonstration of the affection and reverence in which he was held in Paris. Cardinals and bishops, princes and courtiers, people of all classes, hastened to visit him, and from every side came presents such as were thought would be acceptable and useful to him in his sickness. The Saint was disappointed at not being able to fulfil his preaching engagements, but accepted the disappointment with resignation. " I must keep my heart in peace," he wrote, " and united to our Lord's holy will."‖ Happily, he passed the crisis safely, and began to mend. On August 8 he wrote to Mother Angélique : " I am neither cured nor ill, but I think I shall soon be altogether the former " ; and in a short time he was once more going about with his usual energy and zeal.¶

In the middle of the month of July the position of commendatory abbot of Sainte Geneviève fell vacant by the death of Benjamin Princheteau, Bishop of Laon : during this prelate's tenure of office the house had declined both in its spiritual life and temporal affairs, but it had considerable value in the eyes of worldly people, because its post of commendatory abbot was worth four thousand crowns a year. Although the canons had apparently elected someone else,

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXXI, p. 403.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXXXIII, p. 406.
‡ *Ibid.*, p. 391, note. § *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXXXVI, p. 410.
‖ *Ibid.*, p. 414. ¶ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDXLII, p. 3.

friends of the Bishop of Geneva came to him and suggested that he should ask for the benefice. They represented to him that the King would be very pleased to appoint him, in order that he might effect the needed reformation of the house, and that the revenues of the position would enable him to do much good and help him in his episcopal work. Francis, however, refused at once. He had seen enough of the evils caused by this dual system of abbacies in his own diocese, and had no wish to encourage its existence by his personal example: as to the lure of money, even with its potentiality for good, it had never had any attraction for him, and he preferred to feel himself in straitened circumstances, in imitation of his Master. "No," he therefore answered, "I do not want the abbey: I am not in need of anything": and, in spite of his friends' insistence, and even their reproaches on the score of his want of forethought, he persisted to the end in his refusal.

As a matter of fact, he had already refused a much more important position. Cardinal de Retz, the Archbishop of Paris, found himself so occupied by his duties as first minister of state and head of the King's council that he decided to seek out a coadjutor. It was not unnatural that at this time his eyes should fall on Francis de Sales. Speaking of the Bishop of Geneva, he had himself said that the Church had had no bishop more holy since St Martin and St Ambrose, no doctor more learned since St Augustine and St Thomas, and no priest more pious since St Bernard and St Ildephonsus. Consequently he approached Francis on the matter. According to Charles Auguste de Sales it was in the garden at Fontainebleau, whither our Saint had gone with the rest of the two Courts, that Cardinal de Retz came upon him, and, taking him aside, asked him to accept the charge of coadjutor with right of succession, accompanied by a generous pension and full powers to govern the diocese of Paris as he saw fit. "I will arrange," said the Cardinal, "that the bishopric of Geneva shall be left for your brother, I will undertake to obtain the consent of the King and the Duke of Savoy to these plans, and I will supply all the expenses for the necessary papers and apostolic letters from Rome. I think that all this would be for the greater glory of God: for, Sir, you cannot fail to have remarked how much you are beloved by the people of Paris, and can have no doubt that you would be able to effect the same useful work in the future that you have already accomplished here in the past. In addition to all this, Sir, I protest to you that you would place me myself under infinite obligations." Francis in reply thanked the Cardinal for the honour and kindness of his invitation, but felt obliged to refuse, because he considered it was the will of God that he should remain in the diocese over which he had ruled for so many years: he was resolved that if he resigned

that bishopric, he would lay down the burden of the episcopacy altogether; he had scarcely the strength to govern the see of Geneva, much less could he accomplish such heavy work as would await him in Paris; and finally, he protested that the state of his health and the advance of old age would make the task still more impossible.*

"On the next day," writes Charles Auguste de Sales, "discussing with President Favre all these proposals which had been made to him, Francis said: 'I could not but rejoice yesterday to notice that not only did my soul feel no attraction for these things, but even despised them and set no more value on them than it would have done had I been at the point of death, when all things earthly seem like so much smoke.' Nevertheless there were not wanting a number of people who said to him: 'But, my Lord, if you had accepted these offers, you would have been able to do a great deal more good for the prosperity of God's Kingdom.' To which he answered: 'Why, look you, I consider myself as rich as any bishop in France: for although my means seem small to others, yet they are sufficient for my needs. Those who have more, also spend more; and when the end of the year comes, I find that I have as much left as they have. Rather let us say with the Apostle: *The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.*'"†

"The illusions of glory," says M. Hamon, "dazzled him no more than did the glare of wealth. Surrounded by the applause of the greatest people in Paris, honoured by the court and by all classes of society, who proclaimed him the most learned and eloquent preacher of his times, he kept himself ever in humility: the more they exalted him, the more he humbled himself in his own eyes and took shame before God at his own worthlessness and misery. The opinion of men was to him but a deplorable vanity, the greatness of the world but littleness, the things of time but illusion, and he grieved to see how souls that were immortal could allow themselves to be cheated by such meretricious goods."‡

An affair that worried the Saint greatly at this time was a misfortune which had befallen M. Claude de Quoëx in Savoy. This ecclesiastic had been condemned to pay a large sum of money in connection, it seems, with levies for the support of soldiers, and, not being able to find the money, had been cast into prison. Already on May 18 Francis had written to M. Michel Bouvard: "I have omitted nothing that was in my power to serve M. de Quoëx in his affliction. But, as far as I can see, my remonstrances and petitions

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 194 of vol. ii. † *Ibid.*

‡ Last paragraph of chap. 7, book vi.

have been counter-charmed by some opposing spirit, whose power God has allowed to be more effective. I can only guess whence this misfortune comes to me."* On July 11 Francis made another appeal on behalf of his friend, this time direct to the Duke of Savoy. "Having learned," he says, "of M. de Quoëx's trouble, he being kept in prison at Chambéry for the sum of about 1000 ducatoons, with regard to which he was condemned by certain senators and treasury officials commissioned especially for the business; feeling sure as I do, moreover, that in the whole matter with which he is charged he has committed no fault of malice, nor been in any way wanting in his humble loyalty to Your Highness, in which he and his have always very faithfully lived; and, moreover, having seen with my own eyes how four years ago during the troubles in Genevois both he and his brother gave very good and industrious testimony of their zeal in Your Highness' service; I cannot refrain from humbly begging—nay, if I may be allowed, even conjuring you of your great goodness to hold out a helping hand to this good and honourable gentleman and to rescue him from the ruin with which sheer misfortune, and not any crime of his, now threatens him.

"There is no one in the world so good and just that no blame can be imputed to him, if his actions during the space of several years be submitted to a rigorous, inquisitive, and detailed examination. But, Monseigneur, when faults are without malice, guile, or evil intention, and moreover of no consequence, the clemency—nay, even the equity, of great princes does not suffer their justice to use any other correction than a reprimand and warning. And especially, Monseigneur, has your own kindheartedness and courage never failed in affording assistance to the good. All of which gives me hope that this gentleman will yet find every help from your kindness, and that my very humble petition will be favourably received, consistently with that generosity which everyone admires in Your Highness."†

In the month of August Mother de Chantal and several of her sisters were tried by sickness. On August 20 Francis writes to congratulate her on her convalescence. "God be praised, my dear mother. No, do not say your Office yet, but if you can indeed come down for Mass, I quite agree to that: but remain seated as much as you can and away from that great draught which sweeps down your choir.

"I am preparing for my sermon, with much goodwill yet not without fear that I may not perform this duty worthily for this great saint (St Bernard), even though I am intending that he him-

* E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXVIII, p. 376.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXXIV, p. 407.

self shall preach the sermon, since all its ideas are drawn from his own writings."*

On August 25 the Bishop preached on St Louis the King, in the Jesuit church. The building was so closely packed with people anxious to hear him that, as on a former occasion, he was obliged to gain admission himself by one of the windows.

It was about this time that occurred an incident related by Charles Auguste de Sales, when the Bishop was going to the house of the Augustinians. A number of poor people solicited an alms, and Francis to his sorrow found that he had no money. One old woman was particularly importunate, however, in spite of his forced refusal. Something urged the Saint to put his hand once again into his pocket and to his astonishment he found there a piece of money, which he promptly bestowed upon his petitioner. Then, turning to a companion, he said: "Indeed, this woman must have been in dire need of that money, since God sent it to me in order that I should give it to her."†

As far as can be ascertained, it was probably on August 26 that Francis made his longest visit to Maubuisson.‡ It was marked by a return of sickness. "He remained there nine days ill," says Mother Angélique Arnauld, "and never ceased his work in the service of souls. And seeing that the high altar was not consecrated, he said to me: 'I must not leave this house without rendering it some little service; would you like me to consecrate the altar?' . . . and he performed this long ceremony, ill though he was, with the greatest devotion. Afterwards he preached an admirable sermon for an hour and a half, explaining to us all the ceremonies of the consecration."§ On their part the nuns did everything they could to make him better: he afterwards described one as an *arch-doctor* and praised her treatment. On his way back to the capital he went to Andilly, the home of the Arnauld family. Here he gave proof of prophetical powers. As he was caressing little François Arnauld, he suddenly exclaimed: "This child carries death in his eyes." Two or three weeks later the boy was dead.

Francis returned to Paris about September 3. "I must let you know," he wrote at once to Mother Angélique, "that we arrived here in the best of spirits. And how could it be otherwise, after all the kind attentions we received at Andilly, and from your father in this town?"‖ He sent a similar message to Mother de Chantal, telling her of his indisposition and its cure. "Since then," he

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDXLIV, p. 5.
† C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 193 of vol. ii.
‡ See note to Lettre MDXLII, on p. 3 of Tom. XIX, E. N.
§ E. N., Tom. XVIII, note on p. 409.
‖ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDXLVI, p. 8.

added, " I am keeping well, not able as yet to undertake any great efforts, but growing stronger from day to day."*

Two days later he wrote a letter which shows how well he adapted his counsels to the circumstances of each particular case. The lady to whom he was writing was one of those whose time was necessarily much occupied, and he gave her advice which is applicable to many at the present day. " *The Introduction to the Devout Life*," he says, " was written for souls of your condition, and I beg you to read it and observe it as closely as you can ; for it will give almost all the advice which you need. Only I would add in particular that you must learn to make your spiritual exercises short, for the very reason that you have not always much time to devote to them. In the morning seven or eight minutes will suffice. When you are able to hear Mass, do so : when you cannot hear it, spend half an hour in prayer, uniting yourself in spirit with Holy Church in adoration of this Holy Sacrifice and of the Redeemer of our souls who is present therein. Take care to be very attentive at all your prayers and to keep your heart in reverence before God. . . . Be humble and gentle towards all. . . . Pray often for those souls which are deprived of the true faith, and often thank God for the grace which he has given you to keep you in the Church."†

The day of his departure from Paris was now drawing near, and many people who had received his friendship and his guidance were grieving at the prospect of losing him. Several of these he strove to console with beautiful letters of farewell. " With all my heart," he wrote to one, " I bid you adieu—I commend you to God. To God keep yourself for ever both in this mortal life by serving him faithfully amidst the difficulties we all find in carrying the cross behind him, and in the life to come by blessing him for ever with all the heavenly court. The great happiness of our souls is to belong to God, and the greatest happiness to belong to him alone. He who belongs only to God is never saddened except for having offended God, and this very sadness of his becomes a deep but tranquil and peaceful humility and submission, under the influence of which the soul finds new comfort in the divine goodness with a gentle and perfect confidence, free from fretfulness or distress. Who belongs only to God, seeks but God, and since the divine presence is as strong in tribulation as in prosperity, remains in peace amidst every adversity. Who belongs only to God, thinks only of God in every circumstance of this life. Who belongs only to God desires that all should know his will to serve God, and strives to do those things that will keep him ever united to God. Belong to God therefore

* *Ibid.*, Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXXV, p. 409. The date of this letter is corrected in a note on p. 3 of Tom. XIX from July 22 to Sept. 3.

† E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDXLVII, p. 9.

and to him alone, desiring only to please him, and to please his creatures in him, with him, and for him. What greater blessing than this can I desire for you? "*

He had already written a similar letter of consolation to Madame Phelippeaux, Countess of Ville-Savin. This was a lady remarkable for her piety and for her zeal in the interests of religion. She had placed herself under the Saint's guidance and had learnt from him to serve God with simplicity and confidence, free from those harassing scruples that so often distress religious people. "Do not imagine," wrote the Saint, "that wide distances can separate souls whom God has united in the bonds of his charity. The children of the world are all separated, one from the other, because their hearts are in different places; but the children of God, having their hearts there *where their treasure is*, and having all of them but one treasure which is the same God, are consequently always joined and united together. With this thought we must comfort our souls against the necessity which keeps you away from the city and against that necessity which in a short time will oblige me to return to my charge. We shall see each other very often before the holy crucifix, if we keep the promises we have exchanged, and there indeed it is that meetings are solely and completely for our good."†

Another great lady, who was viewing with sadness the departure of Francis de Sales, was Mme. de Lamoignon, wife of the President of that name. Of this famous Christian it is sufficient to relate that St Vincent de Paul called her the mother of the poor and that in after years, when he was assisting at her death bed, he broke into tears during the recitation of the prayers for the dying. "Mme. de Lamoignon," says M. Hamon, "found in Francis de Sales a model of the highest sanctity, enhanced by manners so gracious and so perfect that she used to say: 'Even if M. de Genève was not the great saint that he is, he would still be the most well-bred and courteous man whom I have known.' And indeed, at the moment when they were saying good-bye for the last time, she and all her family burst into tears. The Bishop strove to repress his own emotion; but when Mme. de Lamoignon complained that he was leaving them with indifference, his feelings overcame him and he also was moved to tears."‡

On September 12 Francis wrote to the Abbess of Port Royal. "I am leaving at last to-morrow morning." Poor Mother Angélique had recently been having great troubles at Maubuisson and must have been in some need of consolation. The story of this incident gives an idea of the difficulties encountered by those who pursued the work of reform, and of the turbulence of the times, when every

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXLVIII, p. 11.

† E. N., Tom. XVIII, Lettre MDXXXIX, p. 415.

‡ Hamon, vol. ii, p. 248.

great family usurped the right to do its own police work. Angélique d'Estrées, sister of the famous Gabrielle, had formerly been Abbess of Maubuisson. Her conduct had been so scandalous that she had been cited at last to appear before a tribunal under the Abbot of Citeaux: this she had refused to do. Consequently, on an order of the King, she was removed by force on February 3, 1618, and taken to a House of Penitents in Paris: from this place, however, she escaped in the following November. In the meanwhile, as we know, Angélique Arnauld had been entrusted with the reformation of Maubuisson. Suddenly, on September 6, 1619, Angélique d'Estrées appeared before the house, accompanied by a troop of armed gentlemen under the command of the Comte de Sanzay, a relative of hers, and effected an entrance by force. Mother Angélique Arnauld, giving way to this violence, but led by her natural courage to make a scornful and biting protest, retired to Pontoise. She immediately despatched a messenger to inform her family of what had taken place. The next day a provost and two hundred and fifty archers surrounded the convent, with the object of capturing the recalcitrant Abbess and restoring order. Mme. d'Estrées, however, seems to have had warning of this expedition and had taken flight towards Flanders: her auxiliary force had also disappeared. Consequently the Abbess of Port Royal was able to return with her nuns and continue her excellent work. This return was marked by a demonstration on the part of the people, who accompanied the nuns and their convoying force of mounted archers back to the convent, lighting their way, for it was then late at night, with lanterns and torches.* Naturally, however, the incident had had a disturbing effect upon the Abbess and she had sought consolation from her director. In his answering letter Francis wrote: "Was it not inevitable that you should be tried in this initiation of greater things? Truly, in all this I see nought but the hand of divine Providence, which has abandoned that poor creature in order that her sins be still further punished and that, by this means, she may be led to return to herself and to God, whom she has for so long a time abandoned. I should have preferred that you had not spoken to those people with mockery and scorn, but that with modest simplicity you had managed to edify them by treating them with the compassion they deserved, in accordance with our Lord's example during his Passion. Nevertheless, I thank God that the affair has ended thus with so much edification for your neighbours."† Almost the last words of this letter are: "Practise humility and gentleness." If only the great Abbess had kept this sentence as her motto, how different would have been the final phase of her career.

* See notes to Lettre MDL, E. N.

† E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDL, p. 14 *et seq.*

CHAPTER XI*
(1620)

The Court goes to Tours—The coadjutorship of Paris again—The journey home—Bourges—Moulins—Lyons—Francis's charity—Grenoble—Foundation-stone of new Visitation house—Chambéry—Francis appointed Grand Almoner—He returns to Annecy——The prebend of Contamine—Letter to monks of Sixt—Famine in Genevois—Francis remits debts—The Foras affair—Advent Station at Annecy—Letters about ceremonial precedence, corporal austerity, a sudden death, an invalid marriage, and a vacant benefice—Jean François nominated Coadjutor of Geneva—Lenten Station of 1620 at Annecy—The hermits of Voiron—Francis visits Rumilly—Famous letter to Mlle. Lhuillier—Letters in which he condemns lawsuits, criticizes a book, and discusses ethics of hunting—Visit of Mgr. Camus—Francis's appreciation of this prelate—Spiritual consolation and miracles—A defence of the "Introduction"—Visitations—Francis goes to Grenoble—Necessity of authority for publishing indulgences and charity sermons—Francis goes to Sixt—Apostasy of Denis de Granier—Death of the Abbot of Sixt.

DURING the days of Princess Christine's marriage and for a long time afterwards the political atmosphere of France was clouded by the quarrel between the young King and his mother, Marie de Medicis. This had been intensified by her escape from Blois, in February, 1619, and her settling in the province of Anjou, which thus became a rallying point for all the malcontents of the kingdom. Numerous efforts were made to bring about a reconciliation, and in these the Prince of Piedmont took a prominent part. Eventually, on September 5 a temporary peace was effected at Courcières, whither Louis XIII and his Queen, with a brilliant retinue of princes, noblemen, and courtiers, had journeyed, in order to meet his mother. From Courcières both Courts made their way to Tours. The Prince and Princess of Piedmont were now ready to make their journey to Savoy, but it had been decided that, before leaving France, they should go to Tours, to say farewell to the King and Queen and to pay their respects to the Queen Mother. Accordingly they left Paris on September 13, the Bishop of Geneva, along with the other members of their suite, accompanying them. Passing through

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. viii.

Etampes, Chartres, and Orleans, they reached Tours on the 17th, and the next three days were spent in ceremonial receptions, interviews, and festivities without end.* Such a life would have had little attraction for Francis de Sales, even if its display and joyfulness had been a genuine representation of realities ; as a matter of fact, his keen eye detected the sordidness and intrigue that lay underneath all this splendour, and he spoke of it in terms that were for him almost bitter. " I will scarcely write to you now," he says to Mother de Chantal, " for I can do nothing in the midst of the turmoil here. . . . The Queen Mother has been most gracious to me, and yet I have not the slightest inclination to feel flattered by it. The sight of these grandeurs of the world reveals more plainly to me the grandeur of the Christian virtues and makes me set still greater value upon their lowliness. What a contrast there is between this assembly of fortune-hunters and pretenders—for the Court is that and nothing else—and the assembly of religious souls who have no other ambition but heaven." To Mother Angélique he wrote the next day : " Truly amongst all these grandeurs of the Court (where I must tell you I have been made much of) I value nothing so high as our ecclesiastical calling. What a difference there is between a colony of bees all working together to supply their hive with honey and, to speak openly, a crowd of wasps battening upon a carcass."†

In a later letter he gave fuller details to Mother de Chantal of what happened at Tours and of the people whom he met there. " There," he wrote, " I saw the Queen Mother and paid my respects to her both on arrival and departure : she showed me the greatest favour, especially in expressing her desire to see me and her wish that she could have spoken with me at greater length. I made the acquaintance of a number of prelates, particularly the Bishop of Luçon,‡ who promised me the fullest friendship and told me that henceforth he would place himself on my side, in order to think only of God and the good of souls. I saw Cardinal de la Rochefocaut, who was infinitely obliging to me and told me that . . . he would take particular care of the House of St Mary, that is to say, he added, of your daughters. I tell you all this in order that, if the Queen Mother goes to live in Paris, you can, on occasion, make use of the Bishop of Luçon's favour, since he feels well towards me, and can also rely on that of the Cardinal." It would

* The dates assigned for this journey are taken from the editorial annotations to the Saint's letters, as given in the E. N., Tom. XIX. It would be tedious to refer to all. They do not agree with those of Hamon, Mugnier, and Gonthier.

† E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettres MDLII and MDLIII.

‡ The future Cardinal Richelieu.

have been better both for France and himself had Richelieu remembered always "to think only of God and the good of souls." It is none the less certain that he ever kept a deep reverence for the memory of Francis de Sales: and eleven years later, when passing through Savoy, he visited the tomb of the Bishop of Geneva and remained there for a time in prayer.

In the letter from which we have been quoting, Francis undoubtedly alludes to the coadjutorship and leaves evidence that this question was either broached or reopened at Tours. "Finally," he says, "I saw Cardinal de Retz, who at once invited me to remain in France, making a proposal which, if it was suitably arranged, would be the one most in accord with my own mind of all those which might have been made to me. I will discuss it with M. de Bérulle and with my perfect friend, M. des Hayes, from whom, when he reaches Paris, you can learn more about the business. . . . The Cardinal de la Rochefocaut alluded to the matter in the presence of the Prince, but only as a passing remark. I have been told since that the Archbishop of Sens discussed it for a long time with the King, who was pleased with the idea. However, unless God wills it definitely, I have no inclination ever to desire it, and for my part will contribute nothing towards it except my consent to the providence of God, should I learn that it would be for his service." We learn from the deposition of Dom Berretta, the Barnabite, that the chief attraction of the Saint for this idea of the Parisian coadjutorship was that it might enable him to visit London and, by the conversion of James I, bring about the return of England to the true faith.* It is known from other sources that Francis always cherished this project amongst his saintly ambitions: one never knows what a saint, aided by the grace of God, can effect, but, speaking humanly, such a hope can only be described as optimistic, for by this time Protestantism had a firm hold in our country, and had unfortunately become identified with its nationalism, thanks to such follies as the Armada.

Continuing his letter, Francis says: "The King gave me his commands most kindly, and both he and the Queen Mother told His Highness that they were very pleased with the fact that I was attached to Madame's suite. . . .

"At Tours I went to see the Carmelite mothers and preached there: I was much edified by my interview with the Superioress, the late Mlle. Acarie's daughter, who is a highly virtuous soul and possessed of a mind that is marvellously lovable and frank, joyful and happy. I saw Father Suffren, to our mutual satisfaction, and we conversed most intimately: he is a truly great person, really humble and sincere."†

* Note i, p. 39, Tom. XIX of E. N.

† E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDLX, p. 37.

The Prince and his Consort, with their suite, left Tours on September 21, stayed for a short time at Amboise, and passed on to Bourges. They were received at some distance from the city by the mayor and aldermen, and, escorted by fifty horsemen, made their entry amidst the cheers of the people, the firing of small arms, and the salutes of artillery. Here our Saint was lodged in the palace of his old friend, André Frémiot, the Archbishop of Bourges and brother of St Jane Frances de Chantal. In the midst of all the Court functions, however, there was little time for conversation. Another person whom he met was M. de Neuchèze, a nephew of the Archbishop and chancellor of the diocese: from him the Saint received complaints, of a merely personal kind, about the conduct of Celse Bénigne de Rabutin-Chantal, Mother de Chantal's son. "At Bourges," writes Francis, "we received innumerable favours from our Archbishop; but we have had very little time for talking together. M. de Neuchèze, who professes the greatest affection for you, tells me that he had written to you to complain of the lack of confidence displayed towards him by his cousin (Celse Bénigne), and that, when the latter came to Bourges, he never went near the palace nor even saw the Archbishop, who is very friendly with the Marshal (Lesdiguières). We must give people time to digest their little grudges, and then everything will settle down nicely."*

Francis had very little time to spend with his daughters of the Visitation at Bourges, which he must have regretted, because the reverend mother, who was a gentle little saint, unversed in the management of the simplest affairs, was not proving very successful in her rule. The nuns, however, were delighted to see him. "Our sisters," he wrote to Mme. de Chantal, "were pleased beyond what I can describe, although, in this incredible rush of events, I scarcely saw them personally, but only at the Mass and exhortation."† This is supported by the annals of the convent. "During his stay at Bourges the Bishop of Geneva was so occupied, either in attendance on His Royal Highness, or in receiving the honours and visits paid to him, as to a person whose sanctity was acknowledged by all, that he was unable to give his dear daughters all the time which they would have desired." It is related that on one occasion, just as Francis was beginning a conference for the benefit of the nuns, a messenger came to the convent and said that the Archbishop wished to see him. True to his rule of obedience and submission, he at once put an end to his discourse and made his way to the palace.‡ On another occasion, when his daughters complained that, though he had taken the Princess to several other convents, he had not brought her to the Visitation, he answered: "I want you to learn

* *Ibid.*, p. 41.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLVIII, p. 32.

‡ *Journal*, Sept. 26.

to be humble, hidden, and completely detached from all the vain curiosities of the world."

On September 30 the royal travellers left Bourges and went to Moulins. "At Moulins," writes Francis to Mother de Chantal, speaking of their convent, "I found everything going on quite well, except that our Sister (Superior) has need of a directress, being unable to see to everything on account of the excellent number of novices which she has under her. The sister with the revelations is quite undeceived, and I think she will do famously." The Saint then adds one of his gently humorous comments about a Mme. du Tertre, a young widow, who had been sent thither from Paris as a boarder by her parents, in order to detach her for a time from the dangers of the capital. "Mlle. du Tertre exercises her vanity very splendidly here, having her room carpeted and tapestried and her bed furnished with silk; but she must needs be humoured somewhat, as there is hope of better things. Alas! how silly the children of the world are in their desire to be thought great and worthy of respect by means of these luxuries!"*

The next important stopping-place was Lyons, which was reached via Roanne. During this part of the journey and afterwards Francis continues to experience an increased dislike for the life of a courtier. "Just imagine, my dear mother, that since we were at Roanne I have had no time to continue this letter until we reached Voreppe here, two leagues from Grenoble. Being at Court is a great loss of time, and many even lose their eternity there. Not, however, at this Court, for everything is done here almost according to God†; and it is a great consolation to see our little Madame so happy and so utterly good, and Mme. de Vandaume, who is goodness itself, and all her people so well-behaved and virtuous."‡

The Prince and Princess made their solemn entry into Lyons on October 7 and remained there for some time. While Francis was in this city, he received a visit from two noblemen, who were reduced to such poverty that their very clothes were in rags: the Saint, moved by their great need, supplied them with means to put an end to their distress, although he himself had very few funds left at his disposal.

Another curious incident is related by Charles Auguste de Sales. A gentleman called at the house where the Bishop was staying and asked him to hear his confession. Francis replied that at that moment he was very much engaged, but that in a short time he would be at the gentleman's disposal. The latter insisted on an appointment, and expressed a desire for considerable secrecy: he

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLX, p. 44.

† *Presque selon Dieu.* I have left this with its literal strength.

‡ Lettre MDLX, p. 42.

did not want to be known or seen, he had been deeply influenced by reading the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, he had travelled a hundred and twenty leagues to seek this interview, and, if the Bishop refused to see him, it would entail the risk of losing a soul. On hearing this, Francis made an immediate appointment with his petitioner at the parlour of the Visitation convent. As soon as they met in this room, the gentleman went to the door and bolted it, took some scissors from his pocket and cut the bell cord to prevent interruption, and then proceeded to make his confession. The interview lasted for four hours. When it was over, the stranger thanked Francis with deep emotion, took his leave, and disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.*

On October 19 the Court reached Voreppe. From this place it passed on to Grenoble, where the Duke de Lesdiguières had prepared a magnificent reception for the Princess. Here she laid the first stone of the new Visitation convent. The Coadjutor of Grenoble, Mgr. de la Croix, had arranged that the Bishop of Geneva should bless the stone on the occasion of this ceremony; Francis refused this honour, preferring to act as the Coadjutor's assistant. Having been asked, however, to speak during the function, he accepted this task in accordance with his fixed rule, and preached a sermon on the necessity of labouring zealously in the construction of material houses of God such as churches and monasteries and of those spiritual sanctuaries of God, which are our souls.†

Leaving Grenoble on October 22, the travellers passed at last into their own country, and reached Chambéry the same day. The Saint's immediate connection with the Court was now drawing to an end, and he was looking forward with satisfaction to his quiet labours at Annecy. Nevertheless a further effort was made to keep him in attendance on the Princess, and for this reason he was now asked to accept the position of Grand Almoner or Chaplain. The Princess herself was most insistent about the matter, and the Bishop found it difficult to refuse her request. Eventually a compromise was effected. Francis accepted the post under certain conditions: he was not bound to residence at the Court of Turin, but was permitted to retire to his diocese; neither was he to receive any salary attached to his office. On the other hand he agreed that his brother, Canon Jean François de Sales, should take his place in attendance on the Princess as her chaplain-in-ordinary. On his taking leave of Madame, she presented him with a magnificent diamond. Of the ultimate destination of the jewel there could be no doubt. "This," he remarked, as he accepted it, "will be very useful for our poor folk at Annecy."‡ On October 30, 1619, he wrote to Mother de

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 197 of vol. ii. † *Année*, Oct. 22.

‡ C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 192.

Chantal: "Madame, His Highness and the Prince have insisted that I should be her Grand Almoner: and you will, I think, believe me without difficulty when I say that neither directly nor indirectly have I ambitioned this charge. No, truly, dear mother, for I am conscious of no other ambition than that of usefully employing the remainder of my days in the honourable service of our Saviour. No, indeed; I hold the Court in sovereign contempt, for more and more do I find myself detesting the delights of the world—the world itself, its spirit, its maxims, and all its inanities."*

The Saint seems to have returned to Annecy either on October 30 or 31, and immediately took up his ordinary episcopal tasks as if there had been no interruption. On the feast of All Saints he officiated and preached, doubtless in his cathedral. Naturally there was a good deal of administrative work awaiting him, and his pastoral watchfulness soon discovered several things which in his absence had been going awry. On November 19 he wrote as follows to the Prince of Piedmont: "At the time when Your Highness happily decided to devote your care and authority to the reformation of the monasteries here, you gave orders that the vacant prebends of Contamine should be applied in furtherance of that design. It now happens that a former religious of the said Contamine, being very anxious to obtain a place and prebend for a young and ignorant nephew of his, has obtained letters from His Highness (the Duke) commanding that this prebend be given to him. But one can scarcely believe that these letters are really in accordance with His Highness' intentions, since they are contrary to the resolution which was made after so much deliberation. It is quite possible that the recollection of this matter has escaped His Highness' memory. Moreover, while we are awaiting powers from Rome to apply these prebends more usefully, they have been used for repairing the necessary buildings of the said church and for the upkeep of its sacristy. Your Highness is therefore humbly besought to obtain a declaration of His Highness' will about this matter, in order that we may with greater surety either grant or, what would be preferable, refuse the above-mentioned prebend."†

It had also come to the Bishop's ears that things were not going too well at the monastery of Sixt. Accordingly, on November 22, he wrote to the Prior and the religious of that house a gentle but firm letter of admonition. "I salute you," he said, "and embrace you in spirit very affectionately on this my arrival after such a long absence. Having remarked that the enemy of peace and union is striving little by little to sow amongst you thoughts of division, I beg and exhort you with all my heart not to allow him to prevail

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDLXIII, p. 51.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXVII, p. 55.

against the holy and honourable resolutions which you made with me to live joined and bound together in the observance of your rules, amongst which community and union of heart and property is the principal. You will be strong if you are united, but weak and easy to overcome if you are at variance. And as I shall always make it my happiness to serve you, so long as you live in the observance of your resolutions, so also shall I easily be reft from that affection if by your disunion you take from me the means of helping you."*

The greatest trouble, however, which met him on his return home was that the country was suffering from famine, and that many of his poor people were in the direst need. He at once arranged for a distribution of corn amongst the most necessitous, ordered the priests to seek out those of the poor who were ashamed to beg, and exhorted them to apply to the rich for help, in case the funds at their disposal were not sufficient.

About this time his treasurer brought the account of the diocesan revenues which had been collected during his absence. "I can touch none of it," said the Saint, "for I have not earned it." When asked what was to be done with the money, he gave orders that it should be spent on his cathedral; and that building found itself the richer for his absence by a silver lamp, six chandeliers, and a set of vestments in cloth of gold.†

During the course of the last year the Curé of Viuz, Louis de Genève, had been obliged to bring several lawsuits in the name of the Bishop against a number of gentlemen who had violated the rights of the Church. The Senate had given sentence in his favour with compensation and costs against the defendants. On the Bishop's return the Curé came to see him and rendered an account of the lawsuits and the penalties, which latter had not yet been collected. After listening to him quietly, Francis said: "I tell you what we will do, M. le Curé. I want you to go to these people and tell them on my behalf that I hold them quit for past debts and for the costs of the lawsuits on this condition only, that they shall recognize in future, as I beg them to do, the rights of the diocese affirmed by the senate's decision." The amazement of the Curé at this termination to all his labours may be imagined, but we have evidence that he was an excellent man himself and therefore quite capable of understanding the abnormal generosity of a saint. So he departed on his new errand, and spent a good fortnight in visiting the gentlemen concerned, obtaining from them the guarantee demanded, and declaring them quit of the past.‡

"Such," says M. Hamon, "was ever Francis's generous conduct towards those who lost lawsuits against the diocesan officials: they

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXVIII, p. 57. † Dep. of Favre and Canon Gard.
‡ C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 198.

used to come and ask him for remission of the fines to which they had been condemned, and their request was always granted. One day, when Canon Rolland, his treasurer, was protesting to him that the money payments, which he had thus excused, were necessary for the upkeep of the bishop's establishment, and that, if this sort of thing was to continue, he would be obliged to resign his office, rendered impossible by such excessive generosity, Francis replied: 'M. Rolland, my friend, do not be vexed: if these people had not been at fault, we should have had to do without their fines.'"

In fact, in spite of the slenderness of his revenues, Francis always managed to find means of helping those who were in need. A poor girl, whom he had in the past received into the Church and towards whose support he had continually contributed, found herself unable to marry for want of a dowry. The Bishop sent her a grant of 500 florins, and by this act of kindness made her marriage possible and rid her of all anxiety for the future. A knight of Malta, belonging to the diocese of Geneva, had been captured by the Turks, and his brother was in despair because he had not sufficient money to pay the ransom demanded. Francis, on hearing of this, immediately offered all his silver plate, and gave orders to M. Favre for its sale. This sacrifice, however, was eventually prevented by the arrival of news that the unfortunate knight had died in captivity.*

During the whole of this period, and for some time afterwards, the Bishop was being subjected to a campaign of calumny, which was all the more difficult to rectify because it was being waged against him in the French capital. During his stay in Paris, a friend of his, M. Guillaume de Bernard de Foras, had fallen in love with a young widow, named Anne de Beau, Dame of Vaulgrenant, and had been accepted by her. Her uncle, M. de Montholon, and several of her relatives, were bitterly opposed to the marriage. The Bishop, consulted by the young couple, gave them his advice in accordance with what they told him, and also rendered testimony to the merits and virtues of his friend. The marriage took place in September, after the Saint's departure from Paris. Then the storm broke loose: and matters became so embittered that Mme. de Foras' powerful relatives succeeded in having her husband consigned to prison. The Bishop's name was dragged into the affair: he was accused of having engineered the marriage in a secret and underhand manner, and in particular an utterly shameful and preposterous slander was uttered against him. The first mention of this trouble occurs in a letter, written from Bourges, during his journey home, to Mother de Chantal. Alluding to the marriage, he says: "For my part I only contributed thereto by giving a testimonial which I could not deny to the genuineness of M. de Foras' good qualities

* Dep. de Favre.

and which I had no right to refuse to his friendship."* From Annecy he wrote to her again on November 30. "I see, dear mother, by the last of your letters—that of the 12th past—that M. de Foras is still in trouble and that I am exposed to all sorts of condemnations for his marriage." After expressing a desire that the parliament would speedily vindicate that gentleman and that God would forgive those who were persecuting him, Francis continues: "For myself, I can only say that I must practise the teaching of St Paul: *Do not revenge yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath.* Nevertheless, since you consider it proper, I will write as soon as possible to M. Berger, in order that he may have the wherewithal to refute the calumny, confiding in his perfect charity towards me, who esteem and honour him more than can be described. Do not let this matter trouble you, dear mother. God's providence knows the measure of reputation which is necessary for me, in order to fulfil the service he desires of me, and I ask for neither more nor less than he wills me to have."†

In accordance with Mother de Chantal's desire, however, the Bishop wrote several letters, defending himself against these accusations. In one, composed for the benefit of M. de Montholon, he makes the following dignified protest: "Allow me, I beg, Sir, to relieve my mind by complaining to you yourself regarding the complaints against me—the which in truth grieve and astonish me, being of opinion, as I am, that I have given no cause for them. For, excepting the true testimonial which I gave on one occasion to the merits and good qualities of the gentleman and on another occasion to his fidelity in the practice of his religion, I in no way co-operated in this alliance other than by recommending it in prayer to God, should it be to his glory. And anything that is reported over and above this is pure exaggeration.

"It is true that, after the two parties had bound themselves to each other by love and promises during my absence, I was present, soon after my return, at their betrothal, which they wished to renew before me: but, beyond being present and listening, along with others, I did nothing further and said not one word. Could I refuse such offices to such people? No, no more than the one I performed for you, Sir, who, it seems to me, did not reveal to me that you had such a strong objection to this marriage, and so gave me no inkling of the intense dissatisfaction which I am told you feel."‡

In another letter, written to the Bishop of Belley, he mentions that the lady informed him that the marriage was sanctioned by the

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDLVII, p. 31.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXIX, p. 58.
‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXXV, p. 65.

approval of her mother, and that, though he had no part in bringing it about, yet, when it was decided upon, he counselled the young people not to delay its execution. This advice he gave as a matter of prudence and as being in conformity with the decrees of the Church.*

That this affair, and the infamous slander which went with it, caused the Bishop considerable mental distress and preoccupation, in spite of the patience with which he always endured such troubles, is evident from the fact that it forced itself into his mind even during his religious offices. In a letter, written to Mother de Chantal on December 13, 1619, he says: "The other day, mentioning St Joseph during the Mass, I remembered his supreme moderation when he discovered his incomparable spouse to be with child . ... and I commended to him the minds and tongues of these good gentlemen that he might obtain from them something of his own gentleness and kindness. And soon after I bethought me how our Lady, in her perplexity, said not a word, did not defend herself, nor allow her soul to be troubled, and how the providence of God delivered her: and I recommended this affair to her, resolved to leave it in her hands and to keep quiet. Indeed, all that one gets by opposing the wind and the waves is spray."†

Yet even so it is also evident that his worry was not a personal matter merely, but was based mainly on his regard for his holy office. "I am not greatly touched," he said, "by the censures and reproaches which are cast up against me over this affair . . . nevertheless I am desirous, indeed, of regaining the good graces of these gentlemen in favour of my ministry; if I cannot do so, I will continue to walk therein *by evil report and good report, as a deceiver yet true*."‡

It need scarcely be said that St Jane Frances de Chantal, living in the very midst of all this calumny, was intensely moved by it. "I feel very keenly," she wrote to a correspondent, "the attack made against his reputation . . . but I never cease to love our great Saviour's livery on the shoulders of his admirable servant, who is graced and honoured thereby with a greater honour than are kings by their robes of state." The Bishop was conscious of this feeling in the heart of his fellow-saint, and he gently upbraided her for being so susceptible about his reputation. "You must not be so touchy about me," he wrote, "but must be willing that I should incur criticism. If I do not deserve it in one way, I deserve it in another. The Mother of him who merited eternal adoration, said never a word when they overwhelmed her with opprobrium and ignominy. To the patient and meek belong both earth and heaven.

* Lettre MDLXXVII, p. 70. † Lettre MDLXXVIII, p. 72.
‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXXVI.

My mother, you are too sensitive in my regard. After all, am I to be the only one in the world exempt from blame? I assure you, nothing has distressed me in this business so much as seeing you so distressed. Remain in peace and the *God of peace will be with you.*"*

After the Saint's return to Annecy, he continued his correspondence with Mother Angélique Arnauld, encouraging her in her desire for perfection and warning her of her dangers. Passages from these letters have already been given, but there is one, written about this time, which deserves quotation as showing how minutely he entered into the smallest details of life and how wisely he discriminated the difference in value of certain actions. "You tell me in your letter," he writes, "that you are inclined to encourage your pride by affectation in your speech and in your letters. As regards speech indeed, affectation sometimes passes into it so unconsciously that we scarcely notice it, but if nevertheless we do notice it, we must at once change our manner. But truly, with regard to our letters, it is somewhat, nay, very much more intolerable; for we see clearly what we are doing. If you become aware of marked affectation under these circumstances therefore, you must punish the hand which has written by making it write another letter in a different style."†

His correspondence at this time gives remarkable evidence of the multiplicity of his interests. In a long letter, dated December 16, to his brother, Jean François, he writes of a dozen different matters, with which he was dealing at the time. One of these was the cession to the Chapter of Geneva of the priory of Consieu, near Belley, and another concerned the deanery of Seyserieux: in both these cases the old difficulty of the diocese enclosing two nationalities cropped up. "In this matter," says the Saint, "I see great difficulties on account of the necessity of obtaining permission from the King, who will be very unwilling to order such a union with a corporation outside of his kingdom." There is also evidence that the ancient enmity of certain courtiers for the family of Sales was not by any means extinct, although recent events had put the Bishop and his brothers very much in favour at Court. "My brother of Thorens is writing to you about the letter which certain good people are exhibiting here and there on the sly. Apparently they will do what they can to destroy the slight favour which they see being shown to us. You must not, however, be disturbed thereby, but must answer their backbiting by kindness only. It is the best way to despite and oppose them, scorning their efforts by exhibiting confidence in our innocence and our inviolable affection in the service of our princes."‡ In another letter, written to the

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXXVIII, p. 72.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXIV, p. 52.
‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MDLXXX, p. 77.

Prince of Piedmont, on behalf of the Poor Clares of Evian, he says: "There is not, I think, any convent of that Order more flourishing in real piety than this house." These good sisters had always a warm corner in his heart and consoled him for the tepidity which he saw in other institutions.

Occupied as he was with the various administrative tasks of his position and with the guidance of the many souls who continually sought his advice, he never neglected his work of preaching to the people, which, as we know, he considered to be one of the chief duties of the episcopate. To be a bishop was to be, above all, a teacher. It was his rule always to preach the Advent Station at Annecy, when he was allowed by his other engagements to reside in the city: and so, on the first Sunday of this Advent of 1619, he began a course of sermons on the Commandments and continued the series every week until well after the following Easter. "During this Advent," he wrote to Mother de Chantal, "I am preaching here on the commandments of God, which they desired to hear from me, and they are listening to me in a wonderful manner. But indeed I am preaching with all my heart, of which heart, dear mother, I will tell you this, that God in his infinite goodness is showing it much favour, giving it a great love for the maxims of Christianity. And this comes as a consequence of the light, which he is granting me, about their beauty and about the love which all the saints have for them in heaven, for it seems to me that yonder they sing with incomparable joy: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"*

It is characteristic of our Saint that he never refused his approval or presence at the ordinary festivities of his friends during times like Christmastide or on special occasions. Thus on January 6, 1620, in company with the Duke of Nemours' officers, he assisted at a banquet given by Antoine de Boège to celebrate his appointment as Bailiff of Genevois. That same evening, at the Visitation, the sisters performed the ancient ceremony of the twelfth-night cake, and the bean fell to the Bishop. He mentions this little fact in a letter to St Jane Frances, who was still exiled from her mother house in Paris, and he tells her how he made use of the incident. "What shall I say to you," he asks, "at this beginning of the New Year? I have been drawn Bean-King in your house, and your sisters are very pleased therewith. They have sent me by writing a great protestation of their submission and obedience and have asked me for some new laws for their future guidance and practice. I will think the matter out, so as to give them these the next time I am able to speak to them."† This promise he fulfilled on January 13, when he gave them the conference known by the title of *Three*

* Lettre MDLXXVIII, p. 72. † *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXCI, p. 100.

Spiritual Laws. In this letter occurs a passage which seems to indicate that he had a presentiment of approaching death. "At the beginning of the coming week I shall make a retreat for a special renewing of soul which our Lord is inviting me to make, in order that, as these transitory years pass by, I may prepare myself for those that are eternal." He also sends news of his brother, Canon Jean François de Sales, and gives the first hint of the coadjutorship which was being planned at Turin. "M. de Boisy is still at the Court," he writes, "where he is learning the mortification of his own will most excellently, and still more so that of impatience, restlessness, and impetuosity, for he has to remain three and four hours waiting for the time of service; a good deal more, indeed, than when he used to find someone at the altar of the Visitation. But, for the rest, it is certain that he is doing wonderfully well. Not only our dear Madame, but His Highness (the Duke), and all the princes and princesses, lords and ladies, make much of him and show him every mark of esteem; and now, without my having spoken of it in any way, they are going to throw him into the coadjutorship, if Madame is to be believed, in order that her First Almoner shall be a bishop. O mother, whether Providence wills me to change my dwelling-place, or whether it leaves me here—it is all one to me—shall I not be the better off for not having so much to do, in order that I may find breathing space in the cross of our Lord and may write something for his glory?" It is clear that the saint in him was getting tired of the bishop, and the student of the man of affairs.

In a letter, written on January 11, 1620, to Mother de Chastel of Grenoble we get a little glimpse of his character with regard to another matter. It appears that there was some difficulty about precedence at a clothing or reception. If their confessor, a canon, officiated at the ceremony, could a bishop be asked to preach? Francis, in spite of his deep personal humility, was always insistent that in important matters his official rank should receive its full meed of respect: on the other hand, for the small and punctilious minutiæ of precedence he never showed the slightest concern; and so in this letter he says: "I confess that I understand nought of all these ceremonial considerations, because I have never given a thought to them. Four times, at least, I preached in Paris at the reception of nuns, while a simple priest performed the office; once I officiated at the reception, while a Jesuit father preached: and in the one case and the other I never ceased being what I am. . . . What is one to do amidst these imaginary things?"*

In this letter there is also a strong exposition of his sentiments against excessive corporal penance, written with regard to one of

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXCIII, p. 103.

the sisters, who persisted in fasting beyond what the law of the Church and the rule of the Order demanded. "She is right, indeed, the good sister, in thinking that her inclination for fasting is a real temptation: it was so in the past, it is now, and it will be so in the future, so long as she continues to practise these abstinences, by which certainly she weakens her body and its passions, but, by a poor exchange, strengthens her self-love in the indulgence of her own will; she emaciates her body, and surcharges her heart with the unhealthy fat of her own esteem and her own inclinations. Abstinence, which is practised against obedience, takes sin from the body to put it into the heart. Let her devote her attention to restricting her own desires, and she will soon abandon these false dreams of sanctity, in which she places such superstitious reliance. She has consecrated her physical powers to God; it is not in her right to ruin them, unless and when God orders it, and she will never learn what God orders except by obedience to those people whom the Creator has given to her for her guidance."*

On January 16, 1620, Francis wrote a letter to one whom he addresses as uncle, in order to console the latter for the loss of his daughter. This death had been a double sorrow to the father, because the poor lady had been killed by lightning and had been thus deprived of the grace of the last sacraments. "I seem to see," writes the Saint, "that your heart is doubly afflicted by my cousin's death and by the manner thereof, for I myself, in truth, have had this twofold grief. But nevertheless, although sorrow cannot be altogether appeased so soon, yet we ought to strive to moderate it as much as possible with all the help afforded by true and consoling reflection. That she should have died is one of the accidents of our state, so common, so general, and so inevitable, that I should be misjudging you yourself and the courage of your soul, were I to strive to give you help of consolation for that. And as to the rest, remember that it is the dispositions previous to death, and not its actual circumstances, which are of vital importance. This dear child was good and virtuous, and, as I am told, made frequent use of the sacraments. Consequently she was always well disposed, at least sufficiently, to keep herself in the grace of God: and so her death can only have been good, like that of St Simeon Stylites, who was killed by the thunder and lightning of heaven on his pillar. We must enter into the admirable providence of God and find peace in the acceptance of his decrees, with a holy confidence that he has taken care of this good soul, which he will even have purified by this fire, perchance, in order that she might escape that of Purgatory."†

There are two other letters of this period in which we see, not

* *Ibid.*, p. 105. † *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXCVII, p. 112.

the gentle and sympathetic consoler of those in trouble, but the vigilant pastor, who, without respect of persons, firmly and uncompromisingly opposes that which is wrong. The first of these, to Count Jacques de Viry, was written on January 28.

" Sir, I esteem most assuredly that no man in the world will honour you more freely than myself: and accordingly I am all the more grieved at that which has taken place recently in your house, since God has been offended therein and the public scandalized; moreover the marriage is utterly null and void, inasmuch as the commission to dispense, obtained from Rome, has not been executed. Consequently it will be necessary to celebrate once again the contract of nuptial consent, in order to render this union and its issue legitimate. Towards which I will contribute all that is in my power, under the guidance of ecclesiastical laws and constitutions, provided that it please you and the two parties to believe that in this I shall not exact any condition other than that which is entirely necessary and inevitable. . . ."*

The second letter shows a similar firmness, combined with perfect readiness to accept the judgement of the higher authorities. The parish of Villy had become vacant by the death of M. François Gras. After the usual *concursus* the Bishop appointed M. Gariod administrator of Villy. In the meanwhile the late curé's nephew, Louis Gras, a young priest of two years' standing, had applied to Rome for the benefice: not content with this, however, he was showing opposition to the arrangements which the Bishop had made for the service of the parish, and was generally causing considerable difficulty. It was about this that the Bishop wrote to M. de Quoëx, who had some connection with the Gras family. After an opening passage, he says: " That a priest, without any title either real or presumptive, should be unwilling to recognize the Bishop's authority, should reject the administrator lawfully appointed, should hinder the Bishop from making an inventory of the property within a presbytery, should appeal against this as an abuse of a very lawful authority, just as if the care of benefices under my charge, so long as they are vacant and until they are provided for, were not my concern—all this I cannot consider either good, courteous, or endurable. When M. Gras shows me his legitimate titles, I will not disregard them, and will grant him their full value, recognizing the respect which is due to the rights and acts of the ecclesiastical Superior General. But, in the meanwhile, I insist on being the master, having good title on my side, whereas he has none either for himself or against me. . . . I will relinquish my claim as soon as it becomes time to do so; but at the present moment this is neither in my power nor in my duty, and consequently I refuse to surrender

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDXCVIII, p. 113.

my right to give such orders as seem good to me with regard to this vacant benefice, until it is properly filled ; and I do not intend that those who attack this right shall administer the sacraments, since I have appointed a priest, who will go there to-morrow, to ensure that the people are not deprived of what is necessary in this respect. I like the Gras brothers, and all the more because one of them is in your service : but I am obliged to maintain the respect due to the authority which has been confided to me, and to see that obedience is paid to it, where this is requisite."* Later on, in March of the following year, M. Gras obtained his benefice. With regard to another question, consequent upon the fact that the former curé had died intestate, it was decided by the civil law that the family should pay 1000 florins to the diocese on the condition that the Bishop surrendered all claim to the property in dispute.

In the meanwhile the affair of the coadjutorship, mentioned in a former letter, was progressing rapidly. There are frequent allusions to it in the Bishop's correspondence, and, while it was intended to lighten his labours in the future, it added greatly to his work at the moment. Naturally, perhaps, it also gave strength to the rumours that Francis himself was to be transferred to another sphere of action. He himself deals with the whole matter in a letter written to St Jane Frances de Chantal on February 26, 1620. " You must know, dear mother," he says, " that by an admirable turn of affairs His Highness has nominated my brother for the coadjutorship and succession to this bishopric, on the desire of Madame and the Prince, and that the letters patent and all the most favourable recommendations have been despatched to Rome ; and all this with such complimentary language on the part of Madame and His Highness for the whole of our house, for my brother and for myself, that nothing like it has been known hitherto. And the best thing about this event is that, neither directly nor indirectly, have I sought or procured the favour, which is not indeed remarkable on the score of its resources, but very great indeed in the honour conferred and in the still more honourable manner in which it was bestowed. So that, dear mother, in three months we shall have the consecration of a new bishop ; for these princes, and especially Madame, are anxious to have everything done at the earliest. I do not know whether, on this occasion, they will increase the pension of six hundred crowns, that is to say three hundred pistoles, which was granted to us and which we received for the first time this last autumn quarter. Anyhow, we shall have enough for the positions we hold, for my brother will retain his benefices, which will be sufficient along with the pension. . . .

" Now I tell you this, firstly that you may know it ; secondly,

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCI, p. 118.

that it may be my excuse if I do not write to you, or to M. des Hayes, as fully as I would like, nor to anyone but you two, for I have to write so many letters of thanks to the Court, to all these princes and princesses, and so many letters of petition to Rome, that I am quite (overwhelmed)* ; thirdly, that you may be relieved of anxiety, with the assurance that I will make no change of adventure unless I see a signal occasion of serving God, one that calls urgently at the cost of all else. I confess, it is true, that I am not richly provided with means ; but I am not in any necessity, and have not the slightest occasion or inclination for doing anything unworthy of my state and profession for the sake of gain. I have thoroughly examined my heart, to see whether old age is inclining me towards an avaricious disposition ; I find on the contrary that it rather frees me from anxiety, and makes me neglect with all my heart and soul anything like niggardliness, worldly foresight, or doubt as to my future need. Do not then be worried."

Then, alluding to the Parisian coadjutorship, he continues : " I am certainly deeply obliged to that great Cardinal (De Retz) for the esteem in which he holds me, I who have never merited the least of his thoughts in my regard. But I told him fairly intelligibly at Tours that I did not wish to be divorced, unless it was never to marry again, and above all after the fashion that you mention in your letter. That I should take charge of a spouse bound to another, I !—that, I think, would be impossible for me. Nevertheless, M. des Hayes, who has so much kindness for me and such dexterity in every kind of business, will tactfully find out what is proposed, and will solve the matter, if solution is needed."†

As to the appointment of his brother to the coadjutorship of Geneva, this seems to have been favourably received by the more prominent ecclesiastics of the diocese. In a letter to Canon Jean François himself the Saint says : " Almost everyone here expresses satisfaction at your promotion, and those who do not are of three sorts : some because they think the whole thing has been arranged in order to take me away from here, and they want both of us ; others, because it was so unexpected, that at first they found a difficulty in believing it ; and the others, so few that they matter nothing, because they are actuated by envy, jealousy, and bitterness of heart. But the gentlemen of the Chapter, and particularly the Provost (Canon Louis de Sales), are delighted that their bishop is chosen from the diocese itself. The members of the Council, and the whole town, all these are quite pleased, and everyone approves of it the more because it has been done without intrigue or self-

* Word missing except two letters *es : essouflé*, out of breath, is suggested by the Editors.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCXVIII, p. 151.

seeking. Good M. du Chatelart had news of it first, that is to say, two days before myself, so that people began to talk about it before I knew anything at all. In a word, you must bear yourself so well, so holily, and so humbly, that all the glory rests with God."*

It is quite certain that at this time a number of people in Paris had not given up hopes of bringing him to the French capital, either as coadjutor to Cardinal de Retz or as incumbent of some other honourable position. The moving spirit amongst these was M. des Hayes, who discussed the former proposal with the King, with the Duke of Luynes, the royal favourite, and with the Cardinal Archbishop. They were all in favour of the project, but eventually the King postponed its execution to a future date. Mother de Chantal, in constant communication with St Vincent de Paul and M. des Hayes, kept Francis well informed of these proceedings. Hence his allusions to them in his letters.

In writing to Mother de Chastel on February 7, 1620, the Saint gives us two little personal touches. Speaking of the admission into the Order of a sister whose health was not strong, he says : " I am a great partisan of those who are delicate, and am always afraid lest the inconveniences which they cause should arouse a spirit of prudence in our houses, leading to their being sent away without regard to the spirit of charity, in which our congregation was founded, and in furtherance of which we made its special classification of the sisters. I am then strongly in favour of your delicate person, and, provided she is humble and recognizes her obligation to charity, you must receive her, poor child : she will furnish a continual opportunity to the sisters of exercising their love." The classification of sisters, to which the Bishop alludes, is marked in the constitutions as being threefold : the choir sisters, employed in singing the Office in choir ; the associates, who, not possessing health or education for chanting the Office, are nevertheless admitted into the congregation in order to practise its spiritual exercises and the rest of the religious life ; and the outsisters.

In the second passage alluded to, the Saint says : " I will do what I can for Monsieur N. : but I must admit that, with regard to business affairs, especially those that are altogether of the world, I am more of a poor priest than ever, having learned at the Court—thanks be to God—to be more simple and less worldly."

How well the Order was progressing is shown in this letter by one short passage. " Our mother (Mme. de Chantal) has indeed her work cut out for her in France, on account of the multitude of houses that are being asked for."†

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCIX, p. 137.
† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCVI, p. 130.

It is evident that Francis had always to endure those little pin-pricks which came from the busy tongues of mischief-makers and the exaggerations of gossiping rumour. Some of these misrepresentations were not very important, but whether they were great or small, he always met them with the same patience and humility. Even when he contradicts them, he does so without any trace of rancour. Thus to a nun of the abbey of St Catherine he writes: "It is necessary for me to say a word to you about the rumour that I have been trying to introduce enclosure into your convent. Whoever knows me well will admit at once that I am not likely to indulge in duplicity. If I had entertained this thought of procuring your strict enclosure, I would have said so; I would have declared myself openly, I do not say to you, whom, in real truth, I consider as returning my affection, but to the Lady Abbess and others who have confided in me; for in such matters I work openly and loyally. I intend to tell you some day all that His Highness has said to me about his intentions in this affair, and what I said to him in reply. You will see how lenient I am on the question and how far I am from wanting to entomb you! No, even in a convent over which I had full authority I had no wish to impose strict enclosure, because the sisters had no inclination that way: and I have always held that these important matters depend on the inspiration of the people themselves and not on the will of external authority, which can indeed enclose nuns, but cannot make real religious of them. So continue firmly not to believe evil of me, my good child, and be quite sure that I am open-hearted in my dealings with you." Then, alluding to some of the sisters who were opposed to any sort of reform, he says: "As to the others, God will assist them, if he wishes me to be of use to them; and if he does not wish it, then *his will be done*. Provided that his majesty be glorified in them, as I am assured it will be always, I shall be quite satisfied, and will willingly give up the spiritual satisfaction which I had hoped to obtain by being of use to their advantage. Really and truly, dear daughter, not only in this but in all else, I renounce and resign all my own interests for the furtherance of God's glory, and beg of him to make me myself utterly and completely resigned to his love alone."*

In another letter he gently complains that people had made him responsible for the entrance into a monastery of a certain eminent ecclesiastic—no great crime, even had it been true. As a matter of fact, beyond being told by the priest himself of the coming event, the Bishop had had nothing to do with it, even by way of advice.

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCXX, p. 158. We shall see that eventually the Saint, at the desire of some of the sisters, changed his mind about the question of enclosure.

During Lent Francis continued to preach every Sunday, and even prolonged his course after the passing of Eastertide. On one occasion, after he had preached on the first commandment and while he was closing his sermon with a prayer to God the Father, he was seen by the whole congregation to be surrounded by a halo of light, so bright and dazzling that it was almost impossible to distinguish his features. In attestation of this miracle, Charles Auguste de Sales adduces the testimony of several well-known canons and priests who were present in the church.*

That this course of sermons had a deep effect upon the preacher himself we know from a letter which he wrote to St Jane Frances de Chantal. "What shall I tell you, dear mother, except it seems to me that my soul is somewhat more firmly established in its hope of being able some day to enjoy the fruits of our Saviour's death and resurrection? For our Lord, so it appeared to me, during the days of Holy Week and even to the present moment, has not only made me see the sacred principles and maxims of the Gospel more clearly and beautifully than ever before, but has given me an intensely intellectual certitude and consolation about them.† And I cannot sufficiently wonder how it is that, having always had such a great esteem for these maxims and for the doctrine of the Cross, I have taken so little care to practise them. O dear mother, if I were to come back to the world with my present sentiments, I do not think that all the prudence of the flesh and of the children of this age could shake the certitude I feel that this prudence is a mere hallucination and an utter foolishness."‡

During the month of May Francis was still in a state of some uncertainty as to his future movements. The Parisian project, on the one hand, was not entirely shelved: on the other, there was a prospect of his accompanying the Prince Cardinal on a political mission for the Duke of Savoy. Moreover, it seems that his friends had been representing to him that his family, and especially his nephews, were not well provided for, and that he ought to accept a more lucrative position in order to help them. In the following letter, written to Mother de Chantal on May 14, 1620, he gently insinuates that, as his nephews were no less than twelve in number, the proposed lucrative position would have to be very remunerative indeed. "I am in your parlour, mother," he says, "where I have had to come, in order to write these four or five letters, which I am sending to you. I must then tell you that I do not think anything should be done in the matter which you know of"—that is

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me, p. 215.

† The translator is not sure that his version of this passage corresponds exactly with the original, as he found it difficult and somewhat involved.

‡ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCXLII, p. 188.

to say, of the Parisian coadjutorship—" unless it is the absolute will of God. For, first of all, there is what I told the Cardinal straightway, that if I left my wife, it would not be to take another. I am going along quietly, although with great labour, supporting the burdens of the one I have, with whom I have grown old : but what should I do with a brand new one ? Only the glory of God, manifested by my superior, the Pope, can alter my decision in this matter.

" And now my brother is to be a bishop. That does not enrich me, it is true, but it lightens my burden and gives me some hope of being able to retire from the press of business. This would be better than a cardinal's hat.

" ' But your nephews are poor.' I do not think, mother, that they are any poorer now than they were when they were born, for they were born naked. And then two or three thousand crowns—or even four—would not give me enough to help them, without injury to the good renown of a prelacy, in the exercise of which so many alms, good works, and unavoidable expenses are necessary.

" And now His Highness warns me that of necessity he wishes me to accompany the Prince Cardinal, his son, to Rome. As a matter of fact, it would be advantageous for the very great service of the Church that I should undertake this journey, although, in truth, mother, it is by no means my desire to do so. For, in fine, it is always *going ;* whereas I like to remain quiet ; it is once more *going to court*, and I prefer a simple life. But there is no help for it : and since it has to be done, I will do it whole-heartedly. Meanwhile the intentions of that great prelate yonder (in Paris) will have time to evaporate. At any rate, I will do nothing in the matter unless I am perfectly assured that God wills it."*

During the early part of this year, 1620, Francis devoted considerable attention to the formation of an Order of hermits on Mount Voiron. It must be confessed that M. Hamon has discreetly modernized the traditional history of this hermitage, yet the ancient legends are so delightful that we venture to translate parts of the fuller account given by Charles Auguste de Sales, himself a hermit of the Order and a successor of our Saint in the see of Geneva. The mountain is situated not far from Boège, and to the north-west overlooks the plain of Chablais and the southern waters of the lake of Geneva.

" It was the common saying of all the local inhabitants," says Charles Auguste, " that on this mountain ridge the pagans, in days gone by, worshipped an idol, from which an evil spirit spoke, and indeed would often work harm upon those who failed to perform the accustomed ceremonies. . . . This statue was torn down and demolished by the Bishop of Geneva, St Domitian, during the reign

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCXLV, p. 193.

of Gondesil, King of Burgundy, when the whole tribe of the Allobrogians embraced the Christian faith and religion. Nevertheless the malign spirit did not depart from the mountain, but, in the shape of a horrible boar, worked his rage upon those who ventured to climb it : and that is why no one ventured to make his way into the forest there, unless he was a wizard or had made a compact with the devil. The Seigneur of Langin had his château almost half-way up the mountain," remains of which building, the author tells us, still existed in his day. " This nobleman, desiring to show his bravery, and accusing several other gentlemen of want of courage, so worked upon them that he persuaded them to join him in the hunt : but when they reached the crest of the mountain, the wild boar suddenly made its appearance, rushed upon the knight and inflicted such injuries upon him, that he was left lying wounded and apparently dead, where he had fallen : for his companions had straightway lost courage to help him and had fled in all directions. Then, bitterly regretting his rashness and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he vowed himself to the glorious Virgin Mary, and promised to build a chapel on that very spot, if through her prayers and intercession the wild beast were killed or driven away and he, on his part, were to recover from so many wounds, the least of which he deemed to be mortal. Our Lady did not deny him her help, when he was on the point of giving up his soul ; so that eventually he found strength to regain his château. But, when he bethought him of fulfilling his vow, he found himself in great trouble and difficulty, not finding anyone willing to accept the task and recompense offered, so thoroughly had fear seized the hearts of all. Finally, he applied to the Bishop of Geneva of those days and begged him to appoint some priest for the exorcising of the mountain of Voiron : for no one could believe that the boar was natural. So the Bishop commanded the most experienced exorcist to go thither, who, having climbed up the mountain and having uttered all his prayers, exorcisms, and blessings, had a hut built on the spot and decided to stay there, ready to meet the disturber unflinchingly, confident in the help of God, by whose authority he had undertaken the combat. Having wandered about the mountain for three days, and having noticed nothing untoward or extraordinary, he decided that the evil spirit had been driven away : and, going down the mountain, he assured the Seigneur of Langin that, if the latter wished to fulfil his vow, he could do so without fear, and that the favour of the Queen of Angels would give him all opportunity for his task. The nobleman, reassured by the exorcist's report, immediately set to work, and in a short time saw his chapel completed, on the altar of which he erected a wooden statue of our Lady, holding her divine Child in her arms. Then he begged to Bishop to consecrate the

building and dedicate it in honour of the Blessed Virgin."* This was about the year 1456.

Such was the origin of the chapel and miraculous statue of Voiron, according to the traditions of the country and of its hermits. For eventually the knight built himself a hermitage close to the chapel and there lived a life of austerity with one companion. He was afterwards joined by four others, and it was not long before the place became a well-known centre of pilgrimage.

There is little or no record of the life of the hermits for the next eighty years, probably because all their documents were destroyed during the troubles of the Reformation. In 1536 the Calvinists attacked the mountain, maltreated the hermits and drove them away, pulled down the chapel and buildings, and tried to destroy the statue and bell. These, however, were protected in a marvellous manner. When the Calvinists returned, after their first attack, they were unable to find the bell, which lay concealed under heavy snow, although it was then the month of August. An apostate, who tried to drag away the statue, found that he could not move it, and when, in spite of this marvel, he persisted in his efforts, he was suddenly seized with partial paralysis. Afterwards the statue found a temporary home in the church of Boège. For many years the little sanctuary was left desolate, a few crumbling ruins marking the hallowed spot. It will be remembered by our readers that in 1595 Francis de Sales, while labouring at the conversion of Chablais, visited the ruined shrine on a pilgrimage and was attacked by a crowd of hostile Calvinists, and that he always attributed his escape on this occasion to the miraculous intervention of our Lady of Voiron. When the country became Catholic, the hermitage was restored by a priest, named François Monod, who rebuilt the chapel and obtained leave to bring back the statue to its ancient shrine. Later on he was succeeded by two other men, as hermits of Voiron, Jean du Vernay, a priest, and Brother Jean Grillet : it is related that both these religious had to endure a spiritual persecution, greatly resembling that of St Anthony in ancient days and not unlike the trouble endured by the saintly Curé of Ars in more modern times. Eventually Father du Vernay persuaded a rather remarkable man to join them. This was Antoine Rigaud. "He was a man who had travelled widely," says Charles Auguste de Sales, "and who in his youth had been a captain under the Count of Fuentes, Governor of Milan, and afterwards his secretary. A very great scholar and an excellent man of business, he had an acquaintance with almost every language, but was especially well-versed in Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, and German." Rigaud, desiring to associate himself with the hermits, asked Francis de Sales for his sanc-

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me, p. 202.

tion, which was willingly granted. Nevertheless, the Saint decided that it was now time to regularize the religious of Voiron and to place them under a definite rule. Consequently in the spring of 1620, in conjunction with Antoine Rigaud, he set himself to work at this new task, and drew up a set of constitutions, which is given in full by his nephew, and of which we give a shortened version.

The hermitage was to be established under the patronage of our Lady of the Visitation, and of the saints of that mystery, St Joseph, St John the Baptist, St Zachary, and St Elizabeth. To these the Bishop added in the second and third place the angelic choir of Principalities, and the hermits St Paul, St Anthony, and St Hilarion.

Their habit was to be of white cloth, a cassock reaching to the heels, a kind of rochet as cloak, with a cape and hood.

They were to fast on the eves of their patrons' feasts, throughout the whole of Advent, from the day after the Assumption to the Nativity of our Lady, and on every Friday of the year; this was in addition to the ordinary fast days of the Church. They were also to abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays.

The hermits were to take the discipline every Friday, after morning prayers, while they recited the *Miserere:* instead of this they might wear the hair shirt three days a week, or fast every Friday and Saturday on bread and water.

They were to have dinner and supper together in a common refectory, where also they would make public confession of any fault: if a brother had failed in any important matter, he was to administer the discipline to himself in presence of the brothers.

Those who were priests and those who understood Latin would recite the Office of the Breviary: the others would say the Rosary, to which they would add, in honour of the angelic choirs, nine *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys.*

As to the order of their day, the sacristan would ring the bell at four o'clock, and then go round the dormitory three times, sounding the rattle. Shortly afterwards he would summon the hermits to the recitation of the Office. The lay brothers were to be present on their knees until the end of the first psalm, when they might go out to say their Rosary or some other prayer, being careful, however, not to talk. During the reading of the Martyrology the sacristan would sound two strokes on the bell, on which the lay brothers were to return to chapel for meditation. This would begin with the Litany of the Saints and last half an hour. When this was over, if it was winter time, the brothers might warm themselves for half an hour and then go about their allotted duties.

The Masses would begin at six o'clock and go on till twelve, if there were enough priests for this: if there were only a few, Mass

could be said at the beginning of each hour. The brothers were to serve at the Holy Sacrifice in turns.

On the occasion of feast days, when many people from outside might be expected to attend the services and when it might be necessary for the priests to hear confessions, Matins would be recited on the evening of the day before, between eight and nine o'clock. On ordinary days Terce and Sext would be recited in the morning, None at midday, Vespers at three, and Compline at six. During the *Nunc Dimittis* the sacristan was to ring the bell, in order to summon the lay brothers for the evening meditation, which would begin with the recitation of the Litany of our Lady. On Saturdays, after supper, there would be certain devotions to our Lady, the singing of a hymn or the saying of a litany. There were other special devotions, connected with their patrons, on specified occasions.

The hermits would go to Confession and Holy Communion every Sunday, and the priests amongst them should try to say Mass every day.

The hermits were, as a general rule, to keep strict silence, unless necessity or courtesy should ordain otherwise: in which case they should be careful to restrict their speech to the exigencies of the occasion.

They were to have a great regard for the laws of hospitality, and a special care for pilgrims and strangers, treating these with kindness and courtesy, yet not overstepping the limits of a just economy.

The hermits were only to leave their cells when called to the offices by the bell, when summoned for some special necessity, or when the Father Superior gave them leave to walk about the surrounding woods by themselves for a stated time.

With regard to their means of living, it was evident that at first the hermits might be compelled to seek alms from their neighbours, in which case they were to observe the greatest prudence and circumspection, in order to avoid all scandal, and, on returning home, were to give a strict account of what they had received or of any business transacted. If, later on, they were put in possession of a certain income by the charity of the faithful, this would be a good thing, within certain limits, as they would thus be able to give themselves up more fully to their religious life.

Candidates were only to be admitted after a probation of twelve months with the consent of all the brothers and with the approval of the Bishop or his Vicar General. The same rules as to consent and approval should be observed in cases of expulsion.

Francis was careful to place the hermits under the authority of the Bishop and, to some extent, of the parish priest, and also commanded that they should attend the diocesan synod. Nor were

they to enact anything of importance in their Chapter without episcopal sanction. In case of any kind of tyranny or oppression on the part of the Father Superior, the parties were to appear before the Bishop, who would hear the representations of both sides, and would give an authoritative decision. This, however, was to be done simply, without any form or appearance of legal process.*

These constitutions were read in the diocesan synod on May 6, 1620, and approved officially by Pierre Jaius, Canon Theologian of the diocese, and Pierre Magnin, Canon of the collegiate church of our Lady: they were communicated to the hermits three days later. Then the three or four hermits made profession of simple vows in the presence of Canon Questan of the cathedral, who had been deputed by the Bishop to watch over their interests and spiritual welfare. Francis himself continued to help and encourage them with his counsels, and asked them to remember him in their prayers. "Charity is gentle," he wrote to them, "it is flexible, it is patient: in fine, it accomplishes all things. May God, who is charity itself, deign to keep you all ever in his holy service, in which I beg you to give me a share by your prayers."† And again: "I will have for you all the care that you could expect from a faithful friend and brother. Rest assured and take confidence in this promise of mine. Arm yourselves with humility, patience, and gentleness, and then sing joyfully: *If armies in camp should stand together against me, in this will I hope: the Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Shelter yourself beneath our Lady's protection and fear nothing: let no doubt take hold of you. *And the peace* of Christ, *which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds. . . .*"‡

Eventually Antoine Rigaud received sacred orders from Francis de Sales and the little community continued to flourish in numbers and devotion. "Charles Auguste de Sales was the most illustrious of the hermits: after his election as Bishop of Geneva, he persuaded his former brethren to accept the rule and habit of St Dominic. This took place in 1643, and the convent endured until August 7, 1768, when a terrible fire destroyed all the buildings and the chapel. The statue of our Lady, known as the Black Virgin, was saved: it is honoured to-day in the church of Boège, whilst a humble sanctuary, erected in 1863, and rebuilt in 1893 after a second fire, brings the faithful together again on these mountains dedicated to Mary."§

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 202 *et seq.* of vol. ii. Charles Auguste ascribes the authorship of these rules to Francis de Sales: but a note on p. 283 of Tom. XIX of the E. N. says that Rigaud "composed the rules which Francis de Sales revised and approved."

† E. N., Tom. XIX, p. 206.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

§ Note on p. 206 of Tom. XIX, E. N.

On May 16, 1620, Francis wrote a characteristic letter to Mother de Chastel, Superior of the Visitation at Grenoble. A child of ten years of age, Marguerite Bout de Saint Didier, was importuning Mother de Chastel to receive her as a novice; charmed with the girl's disposition and genuine piety, the Superior nevertheless experienced a natural hesitation on account of the candidate's extreme youth and the difficulties which this might possibly cause in the convent. Consequently she consulted the Bishop, who gave her the following answer:

"The girl, about whom you write to me, being of such consequence, can be well enough received, provided she is about twelve years old. It is true that these young people give trouble: but what does that matter? In this world I have never come across any advantage which did not entail responsibility. We must so adjust our wills that either these must not look for good things at all, or, if they expect and desire them, must put up patiently with the inconveniences which are infallibly attached thereto. We cannot have wine in this world without lees. A choice is inevitable then: is it preferable that in our garden we should have thorns, so as to have roses; or are we to have no roses, in order to escape the thorns? If this child brings more good than harm, it will be right to accept her: if she brings more harm than good, she must be refused. . . . Now, if you receive her, it is quite true that you must not oblige her to follow out in full the usual spiritual exercises, for that might well discourage her, being of such a tender age, which cannot yet appreciate, as a rule, the things of the spirit. As to the habit, I do not think this should be given to her before she attains the canonical age, but you could provide her with some sort of simple uniform, with a little veil to be worn over her head, so that she might in some sort look like a religious."*

On May 18, 1620, Francis visited Rumilly. Here he played his usual rôle of peacemaker by settling a three-cornered dispute between the Curé, the Benedictines of the priory, and the Altarians, an association of priests leading some sort of community life under the care of the parish priest.

It is much to be regretted that we cannot find space for more of the Saint's beautiful letters of spiritual guidance, but there is one letter, written to Mlle. Lhuillier de Frouville on May 31, which deserves especial notice and which may serve as an example of his work in this province. This young lady had been persuaded to enter upon a marriage which, on account of the character of her husband, proved to be a veritable martyrdom: at the end of seven years, on the appeal of her father to the Sorbonne, this union was declared to have been null and void from the beginning. Having

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCXLVIII, p. 200.

regained her liberty, the question of entering a religious order came to her mind. When the Saint was in Paris, she had consulted him upon the matter, and at that time Francis was not inclined to urge an immediate decision. Now, however, he had definitely made up his mind, and he communicated his advice to Mlle. Lhuillier in the following letter :

" Really and truly, my very dear daughter, it is certain that God wishes you to make use of my soul with complete confidence in all that concerns the well-being of yours, which for that purpose he has made most dear and precious to me in his heavenly love.

" At last, then, you are rid of this vexatious affair, dear daughter, with a complete liberty given to you by the eternal providence of God. And since you recognize this, bless his divine goodness from the very depths of your heart : I, on my part, will bless it with you, offering up for that intention the most holy Sacrifice of the altar ; for greater thanksgiving I cannot make to the divine majesty than to offer it up to the One, for whom and by whom everything in heaven and on earth is made pleasing.

" But, my child, what are we going to do with this liberty of ours ? Doubtless we wish to immolate it completely to him from whom we have received it : for that resolution is unchanging, to wit, that without any reserve or exception, even for the space of a single moment, we desire to live only for him, who, in order to give us the only true life, deigned to suffer death upon the cross.

" But how ? In what state ? In what condition of life ? To remain in the state in which you are now would be indeed the easiest in appearance, but in reality the most difficult. The people of Paris, and indeed of the whole of France, could never let you live in peace under your present conditions : they would never cease pushing you violently beyond the limits of the resolution you have taken. And to promise yourself a resolution so constant that no one could shake or upset it, would be to promise yourself a veritable miracle, at your age and with your attractiveness, amidst all the subtle advocates and pleaders, whom the world and its prudence would place around you, and who without any mercy or truce, on one side or another, would ceaselessly make war upon your peace. At the end, by dint of importunity or of deception and surprise, they would wear down your strength and accomplish their designs. Indeed I know well that I need say nothing more on this point, since you yourself admit its truth and recognize that it entails the impossible. There remains then for our consideration the question either of marriage or of the religious life.

" But, dear daughter, I have been in no need of any extraordinary illumination, in order to ascertain to which of these two I ought to

direct your inclination; for, as you described to me clearly and have already made known to me, when I had the pleasure of hearing you speak of your soul to mine, the feeling which you have against marriage proceeds from two causes, of which one alone would be almost sufficient to decide you not to engage therein—a strong aversion, an utter distaste, an extreme repugnance. O my daughter, that is quite sufficient, there is no need to discuss it further. Alas! those souls who have a particular inclination for the married state, however happy it may be, find in it so many occasions for patience and mortification that only with the greatest difficulty are they able to support its burdens. And how would you manage, you who would enter upon it with such unwillingness? Under other conditions, I have a hundred times seen a lightening of the burden as time progressed: but under yours, never.

"Truly, when the Apostles heard our Lord speaking on one occasion of the indissoluble bond of marriage, they said to him: *If the case . . . be so, it is not expedient to marry.* And our Lord, approving of their opinion, answered: *All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given.* Dear daughter, I also, after having heard you speak and having seen your letter on this subject, declare with all confidence and say: Truly, my child, *if the case be so, it is not expedient* for you *to marry:* and although all do not understand this word, that is to say, do not embrace it or take hold of it, do not comprehend its happiness nor take advantage of it, nevertheless, as regards yourself, dear child, you are in a position to profit by it, you can with ease attain possession of this excellent thing, and can adopt and appreciate this counsel. And so, I bid you do it. Now, I say this with all the more confidence, because I see that for you marriage would be more dangerous than for another, on account of that ambitious courage which you have shown me you possess; this trait in your character would make you strive incessantly for the greatest honours and would plunge you continually into all kinds of vanity.

"But, this decision being made without there being any scruples about it, it is much more difficult to go on and say to you: Enter the religious life. Nevertheless I must needs say it, since neither the customs or atmosphere of France, nor the inclinations of your relatives, nor your age, nor the attractiveness of your person would allow you to remain as you are. Of necessity, then, I say: My child, enter the religious life. But, in speaking thus to you, I feel a certain sweetness in this compulsion, such as makes it no longer force, but something gentle and agreeable. The angels constrained Lot and his wife and daughters, took them by the hand, and by force dragged them out of the town: now Lot found no violence in this force, but said he knew well that he was in their good graces.

And our Saviour in his parable bids his servant: *Constrain them to come in;* and not one of those, who were thus driven to enter, cried out: Leave me alone, you are hurting me. I am, then, forced and obliged to say to my daughter: Enter the religious life; but this constraint vexes not my heart.

"My child, let us talk for a while heart to heart together. Do you think that God always gives a religious vocation, or indeed the desire for perfection, according to the natural conditions and inclinations of the souls which he calls? No, indeed, my child, do not imagine that. The religious life is not a natural life; it is above nature, and needs that grace should give it and should be the soul of that life. It is true that the supreme Providence often makes use of nature for the service of grace, but it is very far from being so always, or even almost always.

"He who cried out so sorrowfully: *The good that I will, I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do;* that is to say: *there dwelleth not in my flesh that which is good; for to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not.* Alas, *unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ;* or again: *I give thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore I myself with the mind serve the law of God: but with the flesh, the law of sin;* this man, I say, showed well that his nature scarcely served grace, and that his inclinations were hardly submissive to his inspirations. And yet, he was one of the most perfect servants whom God has ever had in this world, and at the end was happy enough to be able to say in truth, *I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me*, after grace had conquered nature and the inspirations of heaven had overcome the inclinations of earth.

"My child, your fears of meeting with inconsiderate superiors and those other apprehensions which you have so faithfully described to me—all these will disappear in the presence of our crucified Lord, whom you will embrace lovingly. Your spirit, generous with the generosity of the world, *shall renew its strength*, and will become generous with the courage of the saints and angels. You will see the folly of the human mind in its utterances, and you will despise it. You will love *the word of the Cross* which the gentiles have held as *foolishness and the Jews a stumbling-block* and which *to us, that is to say to them that are saved is* the supreme *wisdom*, the strength and *the power of God.*

"But, my child, I would call your attention to one way of mitigating the severity of this counsel, drastic and rigorous as it may seem. You are rich: the twentieth or perhaps the hundredth part of your resources would suffice to make you the foundress of a convent, and in that way you would have an agreeable manner of living religiously away from the press of the world, until practice, consideration, and

inspiration give the final courage to your heart and the last touch to your resolution, in order that you may become fully and completely a religious. In this way you would cunningly outwit your nature and skilfully ensnare your heart. And truly, in the name of the Saviour to whom I am consecrated, this my counsel is concerned with the welfare of your soul alone, and has no other object, neither to right nor left, than your peace and repose.

" Meanwhile, my very dear child, pray to God : humble yourself, direct your life towards eternity, place your intentions high, purify your desires, remember often that a single little advance in the love of God is worthy of great consideration, since it will increase our glory for all eternity. In fine, your spirit, and what God has done to make you his, and a thousand reasons, call you to no common act of Christian generosity. I advise you to have every confidence in the good Mother Superior of the Visitation, just as you would have in me, for she will serve you faithfully.

" I am ever and without reserve,

" Your very humble and constant servant,

" Franc^s.,

" *Bp. of Geneva.*"*

Along with the lofty spirituality of such letters as these, we find passages that reveal in our Saint a quaint worldly wisdom, not altogether devoid of the saving touch of humour. Thus in a letter to Canon Jean François de Sales, he says : " In order to find a chaplain for Madame (the Princess), I am considering the Prior of Mesme, who is quite reformed, has studied hard, speaks well, and has means of his own. In my opinion he would fill the place very capably, and would be grateful towards us for it. So would the whole town of La Roche. I do not know yet whether he would like it, but I will soon find out. His grandfather was a noble ; that is to say, he was made one : and moreover, he is neither lame nor over-punctilious. I made him a deputy for the clergy at the synod, and afterwards superintendent of the district, for which he has shown himself so well disposed towards me that I think he deserves promotion. Add to this that I do not know where else to look, all our ecclesiastics of good birth being either physically defective, or of poor carriage, or lacking in intelligence, or too old, or without talents for this particular post, in which our Mistress desires to have people of good quality."†

In further correspondence with his brother we learn from Francis that there was a slight hitch in the preparations for the former's episcopate. The Court of Savoy desired that in the bull of appoint-

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCLV, p. 213.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLVIII, p. 223.

ment its claim to a right of nomination should be expressed. Rome disputed this right and eventually proved the justice of its contention by reference to former bulls. On this question Francis sided with the papal court. "I think," he wrote, "that this little difficulty (as to their putting in your bulls 'the nomination of His Highness') will not endure long, since it has never been inserted before."*

Mme. des Gouffiers continued, at this time, to give considerable trouble to the Saint by the intractability of her character. In the following letter Francis shows plainly how he dealt with some of his spiritual children, never afraid to reveal to them their faults, even when, as in the present case, he was under considerable obligations to them for benefits either to himself or to the Visitation Order. "Will that excellent disposition, which I saw in you for several months, when you were in this town, never return, dear daughter, into your heart? Indeed, when I remark how completely it is gone, I am in great perplexity, not for your salvation, for I hope you will always attain that, but for your perfection, to which God calls you and has never ceased to call you from your youth. For, my very dear child, how could I possibly advise you to remain in the world? With that very good character of yours, which truly I know to be in you in reality, but which is accompanied by such a strong tendency to haughtiness and pride of life, and to human prudence and wisdom, and which, moreover, is further marked by such great restlessness, subtlety, and niceness of intellect—with all this, what infinite cause for anxiety would be mine on seeing you in the world? For there is no condition more dangerous in that state of life than a kind-hearted nature surrounded by such qualities. And when to this we add your incomparable repugnance to submission, there is nothing more to say except that, for no consideration whatever, must you remain in the world.

"But, on the other hand, how could I advise you to enter the religious life, so long as you not only do not desire it, but find in your heart a complete aversion for that kind of life?

"We must, then, seek out a manner of living which is neither worldly nor religious, which has neither the dangers of the world nor the constraints of the religious life. We might arrange, it seems to me, that you should have a right of entry into some house of the Visitation, in order to go there often for the purpose of recollection. In this case you would not live in the convent, but would have lodgings near by, and would be only bound to certain exercises of devotion helpful to the good guidance of your life. Thus you would have a chance of satisfying your spirit, which has such a strange dislike for submission and the bonds of obedience, which

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXI, p. 232.

has such difficulty in finding souls in sympathy with itself, which is so quick to detect criticism and so prompt to resent it. . . ."

The Bishop then criticizes Mme. des Gouffiers' penchant for lawsuits. "I would to God that your affairs could be settled without lawsuits! For, in fine, the money devoured by your legal proceedings would be more than enough to live on: and, when all is said and done, are you sure of winning your case? How do you know what the judges will say and decide about it? Moreover, you will pass your best days in this very harmful occupation, and will have few left to employ usefully on the principal object of your life: God alone knows whether, after all the worry and distraction, you will be able to regain your calm of mind, in order to unite it with his divine goodness. My child, those who live at sea, die at sea. I have seen very few people embarking upon lawsuits who did not die in the midst of their troubles. Now, examine well if your soul is made for this, and if your time is profitably spent therein. What I mean is—consult M. Vincent, examine the whole affair thoroughly with him, and have done with it all. Do not seek to be rich, my very dear child; or, at least, if you cannot be rich except by this wretched business of lawsuits, then be poor rather than be rich at the cost of your peace of soul."*

During the earlier part of this month of June, 1620, Francis wrote a letter, part of which is remarkable as being a departure from his ordinary line of conduct, according to which he seldom interfered in merely mundane affairs nor took part in the usual Court commerce connected with appointments. That he did so in this case was due partly to his great love for Antoine Favre and partly to his conviction that the proposed transaction was really for the benefit of all concerned. Antoine Favre had not been in the best of health for some time, and had found the duties of the First Presidency of Savoy more than onerous: he was now very anxious to obtain this honour for his son, René de la Valbonne. It was probably at his suggestion that the Bishop wrote to Canon Jean François de Sales as follows:

"The First President, seeing that the condition of his leg will scarcely allow him henceforth to attend his usual hearings, had bethought himself of petitioning His Highness to grant this office to his son, M. de la Valbonne, who would exercise it without further remuneration than what he has already during the life of his father, after which he would succeed fully both to the salary and the office. Now, in order to obtain this, a certain amount of preparation would be necessary, in which you can oblige both these gentlemen on occasion. Thus, for instance, you might manage to initiate a con-

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXIII, p. 238.

versation, during which you could suggest to the minds of His Highness and of Madame the following ideas :

"That the First President is the greatest lawyer of the day, and that it is a pity he can no longer in future sit in court and attend other functions as he used to do ; that while his malady causes him this trouble, it gives him assurance of long life, since it frees him thus from noxious fluids such as would otherwise do him harm ; that it was a most excellent thing, on great occasions, to see him representing the Senate and to hear him speak. Then, that M. de la Valbonne takes after his father in these things ; that he is very conscientious ; that he is an excellent orator with a particular talent for such complimentary speeches as are often needed ; that he presides marvellously well over court or council and pronounces judgement with distinction ; that he is very learned ; that he has been ten years in the Senate, three years chief justice (*juge mage*) and three years President here (of Genevois), and that by degrees he has acquired great familiarity with the administration of justice ; that he is about thirty-eight, an age that has reached maturity and gives promise of much good service. And other like things, all of which are very true : so that beyond doubt there is no one in the Senate better fitted to succeed than he is ; for some are so old as to be beyond work, others are of inferior birth and very poor speakers, and others still have neither his learning nor ability. . . . Now all this must be sown in the mind on suitable occasions with discretion, wisdom, and skill, by way of preparation. . . ." *

It was the custom amongst the sisters of the Visitation, on the feast of Pentecost, to take by lottery one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost as a particular virtue for that year. Mother de Chantal, still in Paris, drew lots not only for herself but for Francis de Sales. This year she wrote to him : "Here is the gift of *understanding* which the divine Providence has assigned to you for this year. . . . To myself has fallen that of *counsel*. To this news Francis answered : "May I indeed receive, my very dear Mother, and employ well the gift of holy understanding, in order to penetrate more clearly into the sacred mysteries of our faith ! For this understanding subjects the will marvellously to the service of him whom the mind so admirably recognizes as being utterly good, and in which it is plunged and held fast : in such a way that, as it no longer recognizes anything as good in comparison with this Goodness, so the will can no longer desire to love any goodness in comparison with this Goodness, just as an eye which gazes at the sun can see no other light.

"But because, so long as we are in the world, we can only love

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXIV, p. 242. See also Mugnier's *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 481.

by doing good—since our love must be active, as I will with God's grace describe to-morrow in my sermon—we have need of counsel in order to discern what we must practise and do for this love which urges us ; for there is nothing so incentive to the practice of what is good as heavenly love. And in order that we may know how we are to do good, what particular good we must prefer, and in what way we must apply the activity of our love, the Holy Spirit gives us his gift of counsel.

" And so now we have our soul furnished with an excellent endowment of the sacred gifts of heaven. May the Holy Spirit, which thus favours us, be ever our consolation ! My soul and my mind adore him eternally. I beg of him that he be always our wisdom and our understanding, our counsel, our strength, our science, and our piety, and that he fill us with the spirit of reverential fear for the Eternal Father.

" You were not absent from our celebration of this holy feast of Pentecost ; for I ever remember the holy devotion you have for this solemnity.

" FRANC^S.,
" *Bp. of Geneva.*"*

How accurate were the Saint's judgements and how far removed he was from the taint of Quietism is proved by a passage in one of his letters, written in the middle of this June, to Mother de Chastel. A book with a long title, beginning with the words *A Rule of Perfection*, which treated especially of union with the will of God, had been published, after some hesitation and with the author's special warning, by a Capuchin friar : it was afterwards condemned, along with other Quietistic books, by the Roman Inquisition. But already, in answering a question of Mother de Chastel, the Bishop of Geneva had expressed his doubts about the work. He says :

" The book on the *Will of God* may be read as far as the last part, but no farther : for this part, being rather unintelligible, might be misunderstood by the imagination of the readers, who, desirous of these unions, might easily imagine that they have them, not really knowing anything about them." He then goes on to say : " I have seen religious women, who, having read the books of Mother Theresa, discovered in the course of this reading that they themselves had as many perfections and spiritual activities as the author, although in fact they were far from it. So easily does vanity deceive us.

" That expression, ' Our Lord suffers in me such and such a thing,' is altogether extraordinary ; and, though our Lord has sometimes said that he suffered in the person of his people, nevertheless we must not speak so flatteringly of ourselves ; for our Lord only

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXVI, p. 250.

suffers in the person of his faithful friends and servants, and for us to boast or declare ourselves such, is somewhat presumptuous. Often indeed our love of self is only too glad to make us believe it."* He concludes this letter with a word of personal advice, which is a favourite theme of his, but which cannot be too often enforced upon certain anxious souls. "Your progress is good, my very dear daughter, and there is no need to say anything about it except that you are too fond of watching your steps as you go along, for fear of falling. You devote too much thought to the impulses of your self-love, which are doubtless frequent, but which will never be dangerous, so long as, tranquilly, without being vexed at their importunity or astonished at their frequency, you say to them *No.* Walk in simplicity, be less anxious about acquiring peace of soul, and you will find it more fully.

"What are you worrying about so much? God is good, he knows well what you are. Your inclinations cannot harm you, however bad they be, since they are only left within you in order that you may exercise the higher part of your will in making a better union with that of God.

"Lift up your eyes, dear child, with perfect confidence in the goodness of God. Do not worry yourself for his sake, because he told Martha that he did not wish it, or, at least, that he considered it better that there should be freedom from anxiety, even in doing good. Do not examine your soul so much as to its progress: do not keep on continually desiring to be so perfect; but live your life with simplicity in your exercises of piety and in the actions which occur from time to time. *Be not solicitous for the morrow.* As to your progress, God, who has guided you so far, will guide you unto the end."†

In these letters of spiritual advice our Saint was not always dealing with such high spirituality and such sensitive consciences. He had frequently to treat of the broad precepts of morality and the difficulties of those who were leading ordinary lives in the world. Thus in a letter to Mme. de Granieu he gives rules for those who hunt. "The first rule is that no damage should be done to one's neighbour, for it is not reasonable that any person whatsoever should take his recreation at the expense of another, and especially to the injury of the poor peasant, who already suffers quite enough in other ways and whose labour and condition should never be despised. The second rule is not to go hunting on the occasion of those greater feast days when we ought to be serving God, and to be careful especially not to miss Mass on days of obligation for the sake of this exercise. The third is not to spend too much money on hunting, for all amusements become blameworthy when their indulgence

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXVII, p. 253. † *Ibid.*, p. 254.

entails extravagance."* These rules might appear trite enough to some: yet the first was particularly important in times when the nobility had such a high opinion of their own caste that they often held the rights of the lower orders in scant consideration, and this is the point of the Bishop's allusion to "any person whatsoever." As to the other rules, they are broken often enough to-day in slightly different ways by all classes of society in their pursuit of amusement.

Towards the end of the month of June Francis received a visit from Mgr. Camus, and on the 29th both prelates assisted at Mass in the college of Annecy, the Bishop of Belley preaching a panegyric on St Paul. Two days later he gave an eloquent exhortation to the nuns of the Visitation. "It was probably during this visit of the Bishop of Belley," says M. Mugnier, "that the following incident took place. As the two prelates were boating on the Lake of Annecy, the men who were rowing chatted familiarly with Francis, addressing him continually with the title of *Father*. He called his companion's attention to it. 'These good folk call me *Father:* how much greater pleasure they give me than those coiners of compliments who call me *My Lord*.'" In this, however, he was alluding rather to the genuine affection of his people as contrasted with the ceremonial politeness of others: for he was by no means opposed to the title of *My Lord*, as given to the members of the episcopate, and used it himself.†

In a letter written about July 5, 1620, to Mother de Chantal we find one or two little character sketches of the first sisters of the Visitation. Sister Claude Agnes Joly, who had been acting as Superior at Annecy during the absence of St Jane Frances de Chantal, was now leaving the convent to found another house. This necessitated a new election. Francis, after giving a general account of the voting, says: "Finally, God decided that Sister Françoise Marguerite should be chosen, and he always decides for the best. For she is an excellent woman, full of prudence, and a constant and genuine servant of our Lord; somewhat dry and cold in appearance, but good at heart; sparing in words, but always to the point. We have no need of prefaces, she and I, nor of epilogues either."

Mother de Chastel was visiting the convent of Annecy at this time. Of her the Founder says: "I really must tell you how admirable is Sister Peronne Marie, in words, in bearing, and in act, for everything in her breathes of virtue and true piety."‡

Soon after the departure of Mgr. Camus, Francis wrote a letter to Rome, which reveals his very high opinion of that prelate. "I

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXVIII, p. 258.

† Mugnier's *Journal*, p. 271.

‡ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCLXXII, p. 264.

have heard from Paris that, to the great satisfaction of the King, the Queen, of the whole court, and of all right-minded people in the city, the aged Dean of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois has resigned his office in favour of my Lord the Bishop of Belley. There is in this, however, a difficulty on account of the incompatibility of the episcopate with this benefice. And truly, the difficulty is a genuine one, speaking according to the ordinary law. But there is another and higher law—*Salus populi suprema lex*, the salvation of the people is the supreme law—according to which I venture to say that no greater service could be rendered to God, to the Apostolic See, and to Holy Church, than to grant a dispensation in such a case and to bestow the benefice upon this prelate. And this for two chief reasons.

"The first, that the church of St Germain is one of the most important in Paris, being the parish church of the Louvre, of the court, and of many thousands of people; and if this deanery became vacant by the death of its incumbent, it might fall, by means of solicitation and intrigue, into the hands of one who would prove to be an enemy of Catholic unity and of Apostolic authority, for there are many people of this tendency, who are very much in favour and who might stir up in that great city a good deal of religious unrest, such as would be suppressed with difficulty and only with the worst results.

"The other reason is that my Lord of Belley is most devoted to God and to Holy Church, and that he has a great name in that city as one of the most powerful preachers in France. Moreover, he will in any event be obliged to resign the bishopric of Belley, which contains neither as many priests nor as many souls as the parish of St Germain itself, quite apart from the disproportion that exists between the value of the prelate and the importance of the diocese. To which I may add that I know of my own knowledge that the King wishes to have him as a State Counsellor, and that, although he was preaching every day during the past Lent, the Queen desired him to go during the evenings and give spiritual conferences in her presence. . . .

"Your most illustrious and most reverend Lordship will kindly pardon my speaking about these matters, but I felt bound in conscience to put them before you."*

During the month of June Mother Geneviève de Saint Bernard, a daughter of Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, had been appointed Prioress of the Carmelite convent at Chartres. She had apparently written to Francis, expressing her anxiety as to whether the future would prove her capable of properly fulfilling her charge. The Bishop answered with a letter full of encouragement, exhorting her

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXXVI, p. 275.

to be brave as well as humble, and recommending her not to look too far ahead. "Remember," he says, "that our Saviour told us to ask not for our annual or monthly or weekly bread, but for our *daily* bread. Strive to do well to-day without thinking of to-morrow; then on the morrow, try to do the same. Do not keep thinking of what you will do during the whole time of your charge, but go on from day to day exercising that office without extending your care into the future; for your heavenly Father, who watches over you to-day, will watch over you to-morrow and the next day, so long as, recognizing your own weakness, you place all your trust in his providence."*

Many incidents are related about this period of the Saint's life such as reveal his own progress in spirituality and mark his labours with the seal of miraculous power. One day, when he was preparing for the Holy Sacrifice, he was so filled with spiritual sweetness that he lost all cognisance of the passing time. One of his chaplains, knowing that a number of people were waiting for Mass, came and reminded him that it was past his usual time for going to the altar. "Ah!" exclaimed Francis, as he rose from his knees, "I am going then to receive him, this divine Saviour of mine, I am going to receive him!" So manifest was his happiness, as he put on his vestments, that afterwards M. Favre, his confessor, asked him, when they were alone together, to reveal its cause. "It was," answered the Bishop, "because God had granted me such wonderful enlightenment on the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist and had inundated me with such a fulness of grace, that the joy of my soul filled all my being."

On another occasion, when he had been dining with Réne de la Valbonne at Proméry, word was brought that some people wished to see him. It transpired that one of M. de Monthoux's servants, a man named Bouvard, had been afflicted for some months with terrible fits of madness, and was at times completely out of control. The man's friends, therefore, had brought him to the house, to ask Francis to cure him. The Saint took him by the hand and walked about the room with him for a short time; then—a thing which he did on several similar occasions—he gently pulled the man's hair. Immediately, Bouvard felt himself cured of his trouble, and kneeling down, asked for the Saint's blessing. "And now," said Francis, "you can go, my dear child: fear God and work well." Then turning to M. Prière, who had brought Bouvard to the house, he said: "Give him work. He is quite cured." And, indeed, the man never suffered in the same way again.

During the month of July, when the Bishop was at Annecy, he was told that a great friend of his, Mme. Jacquéline Achard of

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCLXXXIX, p. 300.

Berbey, was so ill that the doctors despaired of her life. Francis immediately made his way to the altar and prayed that she might be spared. Returning to his room, he said to two of his friends: "No, Mme. de Berbey will not die: I have asked our Saviour to cure her." At this very time those who were in attendance on the invalid remarked a sudden improvement in her condition, and eventually she was completely restored to health.

The Saint also cured a poor peasant, who had been brought into Annecy, suffering from insanity, by much the same method as he had used with Bouvard.*

At the beginning of August, 1620, Francis was not in the best of health himself. "For the last eight or nine days," he writes to Mother de Chantal, "I have been experiencing somewhat those little indispositions which the summer usually brings me. Our M. Grandis," the physician, "says that it is nothing, and not only do I take his word for it, but even feel myself that it is so. Nevertheless I must needs write as little as possible; next month I shall be free from such restriction."† The Bishop, however, continued to fulfil his public duties, and even found himself obliged, by difficulties connected with the foundation of the Visitation at Nevers and Moulins, to carry on a lengthy correspondence. This was a long and tedious business, connected with Mme. du Tertre's endowments, and it gave much trouble to Mothers de Chantal and de Chastel, as well as to the Saint himself. It was eventually settled on the general lines suggested by the last.‡

On August 5, Francis wrote to the Prior of Contamine a short note which reveals the violent nature of the times even amongst those who of their calling should have been peaceful. "M. Crosson came to me the other day to complain of his Prior, and to-day his Prior comes and complains of him, and has shown me his face all bruised with blows which, he alleges, he received from the said M. Crosson. He begs me to ask you if you would kindly go there to the place of the quarrel (Thiez) and hold an enquiry—which, in my opinion, is very necessary. And if you will be so good as to arrange that I may make use of the result of your inquisition, we shall be able to do justice, to the one through you and to the other through me."§

In one of his letters there is an indirect but interesting defence of certain passages in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. This letter was written to a Jesuit, Father Antoniotti, who had translated the *Introduction* into Italian, and had sent the manuscript to the

* C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, pp. 216, 217 of vol. ii.
† E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCXC, p. 302.
‡ For a full account see Appendix III, Tom. XIX, E. N.
§ E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCXCII, p. 306.

author. "I return your reverence's translation," writes Francis, "after going through it from beginning to end. It seems to me to have been done very well indeed; and I humbly thank your reverence for deigning to undertake it.

"One thing only gives me cause for reflection. Several Italian gentlemen tell me that, while the chapters in which I deal with games, balls, love-affairs, and such-like amusements and pastimes, as also that on the *Chastity of the Marriage State* and the illustration of the tempted Princess in the treatise on *Temptations*, are suitable for the lightness and liberty of the French nation, the natural restraint and gravity of the Italians eliminate the necessity for speaking about these subjects. I leave this matter to your reverence's judgement, only remarking that, to my own knowledge, in several parts of Italy there are balls, games, and intrigues, especially in the neighbourhood of Germany and France, such as our own Piedmont. Moreover, this book has been translated without omissions in Spain, where, indeed, they have the greatest esteem for seriousness and dignity. In such a work as this, the wise and virtuous must exercise patience when they are dealing with the less wise, such as men of the world, courtiers, and others—*To the wise and the unwise I am a debtor*. . . .

"I am sending you my *Treatise on the Love of God*, which is being translated with some success, so I understand, by a nobleman. . . . Your reverence will see in the Preface that I am writing very little. Not, indeed, for want of subjects: for I would have plenty to write about the love of one's neighbour and about matters on which I have preached three or four thousand sermons during the last twenty-eight years, and which, in the opinion of many, would be useful for the public good. Last year, when I was in Paris with the Most Serene Prince Cardinal, many people of high standing were very urgent with me on the subject. But, burdened with the pastoral office, I find it impossible to write for the press. If the divine Majesty wills it, he will give me the opportunity of doing so: and if he does not will it, neither ought I.

"As to the *Introduction*, it has indeed been very useful in France, in Flanders, and in England. It has been reprinted in France more than forty times in divers places: and has even resulted in the conversion of heretics. . . . I do not know whether it will have as much success in Italy. . . ."*

As a matter of fact, the book had a great success in that country, "enlightening many souls, who read it with great profit," as Dom Juste Guérin testifies in June, 1621, to Mme. de Charmoisy, the *Philothea* of the original.†

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCXCVIII, p. 318.

† Note to the foregoing, p. 323.

On September 22, 1620, Francis wrote to Mother de Chantal a letter, in the course of which he says: "To-morrow I am going to see Monsieur de Belley, whom I find ever more and more charming: but I do not see how one can persuade him to abandon those exaggerated gestures in his preaching, nor stop the flow of his pen, as several excellent people desire, according to your letter. In fact, at present, he is writing several things which the Jesuit fathers yonder and several theologians have seen and which they consider will be very useful for society."*

Francis left Annecy about September 24, visited several churches in Le Bugey, and then went on to Grenoble. During this journey he visited M. and Mme. de Menthon of Escrivieux: this worthy couple, though married now for some time, were childless, and complained of this fact to the Saint. Francis promised to pray for them, and, after saying Mass for their intention, said to Mme. de Menthon: "My child, give thanks to God; for he has granted your prayers, and before a year has passed, you will have a son." He also predicted that two of her daughters would become nuns of the Visitation. Both these prophecies were realized.†

Towards the end of this month of September the Saint wrote a letter, which, while written for the special condition of the recipient, contains a passage applicable to all those who find themselves hampered in their spiritual life by weakness of health. "My very dear daughter, we must not be unjust with ourselves nor make greater demands upon ourselves than our strength allows. When we are troubled by bodily ill-health, we must only exact of our minds acts of submission and resignation and the devout union of our wills with that of God, acts that are formed in the higher parts of the soul. As to our external acts, we must direct and perform these as well as we can and be satisfied with just doing them, even though we do them against the grain, languidly and sluggishly. And in order to make the most of this languor, heaviness and dullness of heart, and make it do service towards the divine love, we must humbly avow, accept, and love the humiliation of it all. In this way you will change the leaden metal of your heaviness into gold, and into a gold more refined than that of your greatest natural alacrity of heart. Have patience, then, with yourself; and let the higher part of your being support with that same patience the weakness of the lower."

In order to illustrate the further teaching of this letter, he introduces us to a picture of Brother Nicolas de la Marche, the Franciscan artist. "We have here at Annecy a Capuchin painter, who, as

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCII, p. 336.

† E. N., note ii, p. 305 of Tom. XIX; *Journal*, p. 275; and C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 218 of vol. ii.

you can imagine, produces pictures only for God and his temple: and although, when working, he so concentrates his attention on what he is doing that he cannot pray at the same time, and though moreover this occupies and tires out his mind, nevertheless he goes on labouring with all his heart for the glory which must accrue to our Lord and in the hope that these paintings will help many of the faithful to praise God and bless his goodness."*

In another letter of this period we find that, however charitable the Saint was and however anxious to grant favours to his petitioners, he did not let his charity overrule his prudence. It contains one or two sentences that are very applicable to the present day.

"VERY REVEREND LORD,

"We have received a letter, presented in Your Lordship's name, in which permission is asked for your representative to collect alms from the faithful in our diocese, to publish indulgences, and to enrol Catholics of both sexes in the Confraternity of your house. On account of the wide-spread fame and renown of that house, we have gladly seen and read the letters so kindly written, and are greatly desirous of granting what is desired. Nevertheless, when we came to the point of asking the bearer of these letters for an authentic document, authorizing him to act for your house, for a bull or brief or a copy of the grant of these indulgences, he replied that he was not provided with them. But, Reverend Lord, we are stirictly cautioned, both by Canon Law and a decree of the Council of Trent, not to permit the publication of indulgences, and especially those connected with the collection of alms, unless we have thoroughly trustworthy evidence as to their concession. Prudence itself, supported by long experience, teaches us that not to every person claiming to collect alms for pious institutions should credence be given or leave granted. And on this point the Holy See warned us not so long ago to exercise a special care.

"Wherefore, until we are fully assured as to the powers of the person who brought the letters and as to the grant of the indulgences, we have given orders that the collection of alms and the publication of indulgences shall not be made; nevertheless we are fully prepared to further your wishes and the interests of your house, as soon as we are permitted to do so by the canons of ecclesiastical law. We feel sure that Your Lordship will take this not only without misunderstanding, but with goodwill and complete acquiescence, and that you and yours will commend us in your prayers to God, as we on our part will do for you."†

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCCIV, p. 340.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCVI, p. 345.

A certain amount of controversy was rife at this time as to whether convents of women should be placed under the authority of the Bishop or of some Order. On this point Francis writes to Mother de Chantal: "For myself, my very dear mother, I confess frankly that I cannot at present give my assent to the opinion of those who want convents to be placed under the authority of religious, and especially of the same Order, following in this the instinct of the Holy See, which, whenever it can manage to do so, prevents this submission." Later on in this letter he expresses the opinion that religious Orders, when governing nuns, are inclined to deprive the latter of "holy liberty of spirit."*

Towards the end of October Francis received a present from Mother de Monthoux, Superioress of the Visitation of Nevers, in the shape of a set of breviaries. On November 2 he thanks her for the gift and promises to send her his old set. When he fulfilled his promise, Mother de Monthoux received these breviaries as a precious relic and treated them with the greatest reverence. It is related that on the day of the Saint's death, the two volumes twice opened of themselves and filled the house with a sweet odour as of incense, by which miracle the sisters received a warning of his passing away.†

In November, 1620, the affairs of the monastery of Sixt once more claimed the Bishop's attention, busied as he was with his ordinary episcopal work and an ever increasing correspondence. Two years ago he had succeeded in reintroducing into the abbey a certain regularity of observance: but in the meanwhile quarrels had broken out between the Abbot and his religious, the peace of the house was disturbed, and its discipline in danger of relaxation, Francis, accompanied by two canonists, Michel Bouvard and Jacques Despine, left Annecy about November 12, and made his way to Sixt. Arriving at the monastery, he held an enquiry into the recent troubles, listened patiently to all the complaints of the two parties, and by his power of conciliation succeeded in restoring goodwill and order. After the Saint's death the canons of the abbey gave testimony to the power of his eloquence and saintly example. "It is difficult to describe," they said, "the beauty of the spiritual exhortations which he addressed to us, in order to make us embrace courageously the observance of our rule and to revive the ancient discipline. We looked upon him as an angel, a John the Baptist in innocence and purity, an Elias in zeal, a John the Evangelist in gentleness and charity."

During the Bishop's stay at Sixt, he made an examination of the tomb and relics of Blessed Ponce, the Founder and first Abbot of

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCVII, p. 348.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCXX, p. 367 and note.

the house, in whose name many miracles had formerly been worked and recorded. Francis carried out this task with the greatest reverence and devotion, earnestly begging the saintly Founder to help his successors in restoring to the abbey its former fervour. As if to give him a gage that his prayers would be answered, a miracle took place during the examination, when a sick person was instantly cured of his malady on touching the relics of the tomb. But the greatest miracle of all was the Bishop's conquest of Jacques de Mouxi, the aged Abbot, who had hitherto shown himself a most difficult person to deal with. Overcome by the Saint's charity, the Abbot made a complete surrender, and gave himself up without reserve to the guidance of Francis in a general confession. Not once, but many times, he was heard to say : " My Lord, I commit my soul and all that I have into your hands." Francis, on his part, foresaw that the old man had not long to live, and, speaking to Humbert de Mouxi, a nephew of the Abbot's, said : " Your uncle will not live to see the end of the next month." Having finished his work at Sixt, the Bishop returned to Annecy by way of Viuz, Melan, and Meyrens.*

A cruel shock awaited him on his return home. Opening by mistake a letter intended for his brother, the Canon, he found that it came from Denis de Granier and contained the news of the writer's apostacy in England. " Here is a letter," he writes to Jean François, " which I opened without noticing that it was not for me. O brother, what sorrow filled my heart when I read it ! Certainly, never in my life have I experienced so terrible a shock. It seems impossible that this soul should be lost in this manner. He told me so often that he would never be anything but a child of the Holy Roman Church, even though he thought that the Pope exceeded just limits in extending the scope of his authority. Nevertheless, after having declared that the Supreme Pastor of the Church ought not to have undertaken to free subjects from obedience to the supreme Prince of the State, no matter what evil the latter did, he himself, for some fancied abuse or other, becomes a rebel against that Supreme Pastor, or, to use his own words, against all the pastors of the Church in which he was baptized and reared. He, who declared that he could not find enough evidence in Scripture for the authority of St Peter over the rest of Christianity, how has he managed to place himself under the ecclesiastical authority of a king, whose power Scripture has only authorized in civil affairs ? If he discovered that the Pope was exceeding the limits of his power in undertaking something against the temporalities of princes, how does he not also see that the King under whom he has gone to

* See C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 219 of vol. ii ; also note, p. 372, Tom. XIX of E. N.

live, is exceeding the limits of *his* authority by encroaching upon the spiritual power? . . ."

Later on the Bishop says: "I have a particular affection for that great island and for its King, and never cease commending their conversion to the divine Majesty, confident that I shall be heard, along with all the souls who yearn for this result; and henceforward I shall pray still more ardently, it seems to me, out of consideration for this particular soul. . . ."

As to the Bishop's attitude towards Canon de Granier, it could only be one of expectation and compassion: there was no room in his heart for rancour. "If you write to him—and he seems to ask you to do so—assure him that all the waters of the English Sea will never extinguish the flames of my love, so long as some little hope is left to me of his return to the Church and to the path of his eternal salvation."

As we have seen elsewhere, Denis de Granier did eventually return to the Church of his birth, though his after-career was one of failure and disgrace.*

In a letter written to Mme. de Granieu on November 24, 1620, the Saint has a remarkable passage, dealing with the value of suffering in union with the passion of Christ. "If there could possibly be any envy in the Kingdom of eternal love, the angels would envy men for two privileges which consist of two sufferings: the one is that which our Lord endured on the cross for us, and not for them, at least so entirely; the other is that which men endure for our Lord: the suffering of God for man, the suffering of man for God."†

At the end of the month of November Francis received news that the Abbot of Sixt was dying and desired to see him. In spite of the hardships of travelling through the mountains at this season, the Bishop immediately made his way to Sixt. At the desire of Jacques de Mouxi, he spent the first three days in hearing a full confession of the latter's life. On the fourth day the Abbot, who had been ordained to the diaconate only, was vested in cassock and surplice, and taken to the Church: here he heard Mass and received Communion at the Bishop's hands. M. Gonthier avers that he also received the priesthood before the end. Thenceforward he was completely changed: full of fervour and divine love, he concentrated all his powers on spiritual affairs, and refused to discuss any other matter with those who came to see him. He died on December 4, assisted by the Saint up to his last moments. It was another victory for the heroic patience and charity of Francis de Sales.

* E. N., Tom. XIX, Lettre MDCCXXVII, p. 381.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCXXXI, p. 391.

CHAPTER XII*
(1621)

Jean François de Sales consecrated Bishop of Chalcedon—Francis trains him for the episcopacy—Their relations with each other—Death of Paul V—Francis visits Lyons—Returns to Annecy—Goes to Thonon—Nuns of St Catherine oppose his efforts to reform them—Francis receives visit from Antoine Favre—Translation of St Germain's relics at Talloires—The Saint's literary plans—Prince Thomas of Savoy visits Francis at Annecy—Letter to Father Binet about Mother Angélique Arnauld—Francis goes to St Catherine—Hardships of the Visitation at Valence—The Saint's letter about faith—Parish affairs of Rumilly—Death of Mme. des Gouffiers—The Saint's description of his own affectionate nature—Letter of direction to a young nobleman.

JEAN FRANÇOIS DE SALES, having at last received from Rome the bulls which nominated him Coadjutor of Geneva, under the title of Bishop of Chalcedon, was consecrated at Turin on January 17, 1621. Shortly afterwards he set out for Annecy, which he reached towards the end of the month. Although it was very late in the evening when he arrived, he found Francis awaiting him at the gates of the city, anxious to show him every sign of affection and respect in view both of their relationship and of the sacred dignity with which he was now invested. During the next three days Francis continued this policy of honouring his brother in the most signal fashion. He made the Bishop of Chalcedon pontificate in his presence, accompanied him everywhere, and gave him precedence of place to such an extent that his friends complained that he was going too far. To this remonstrance Francis answered, as was his wont, with a quotation from Scripture. "*He must increase, but I must decrease.* He must work and I must rest." He expressed the same idea to the Bishop of Chalcedon himself. "I never asked the Duke of Savoy, either myself or through others, for the privilege of having you as my right arm. God's will and providence alone have raised you to this dignity. I thank the divine mercy for it, for I am hoping that you will take the office of Martha and will leave me that of Mary."

"Full of this idea," says M. Hamon, "Francis devoted himself completely to training the Bishop of Chalcedon in the difficult art of episcopal administration. He prepared him to assume the direc-

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 9.

tion of the diocese, as if he was soon to leave him. Every day, at a certain hour, he shut himself up with him in his study, showed him in detail the account of the staff and property of the parishes and churches in the diocese, the characters and dispositions of peoples and pastors, their good and bad qualities, the methods of correcting evils, of establishing and consolidating that which was good. Then he would expound to him important points of theology, the more difficult passages of Scripture, the best system of preaching and exhortation, and the rules of episcopal government. 'My dear brother,' he would often repeat, 'it is time for me to give you the best of my knowledge: for who knows when the hour of death will strike?' To theory he joined practice, and made his brother carry out every kind of episcopal function in his presence. He deputed him to officiate at ordinations on March 6 and on Holy Saturday, as also during the Ember season of September. . . .

"The two bishops led a community life together in a perfect union, that owed its origin and preservation to virtue alone: for they differed greatly in character and disposition. Francis was easy of approach, kind and gentle under every kind of provocation, always ready to excuse and pardon the faults of others. The Bishop of Chalcedon, on the other hand, was austere, serious, and somewhat taciturn; in his dealings with offenders he was inclined to be severe and even harsh. But the humility of the one, the genuine affection of the other, the virtue of both, removed the possibility of any real disagreement between them." From time to time Francis' forgetfulness of himself, and even, be it said, of intimate friends, in his indulgent dealings with the people, would offend the younger brother's sense of proportion, as it had often done with good Canon Rolland: but the invulnerable nature of Francis' patience and his good-humoured wit would always smooth things over. "One day, when they were about to say Office together, the Saint was called out to hear someone's confession, and the confession lasted for a very long time. After they had begun the recitation of their breviary, they suddenly noticed that for the first nocturn they had been saying the wrong Office. The Bishop of Chalcedon, already ruffled by the boredom of his long waiting, could no longer restrain his temper, and in a very acrid manner accused his brother of being the cause of their mistake. Francis, taking no notice of the other's bitterness, begged him not to be vexed, and assured him that Almighty God, less critical of willing service than men, would be quite satisfied with the nocturn which they had just said. So they continued their Office without going back.

"Another day, just as they were sitting down to table, a poor servant called at the door, to speak to the Bishop of Geneva: the

latter gave orders that she should be shown into one of the rooms, went in to see her, and gave her as long an audience as she desired. The Bishop of Chalcedon found this altogether too much for him, and, when Francis at last came in to dinner, exclaimed : 'Really and truly, you would make anybody in the world lose their patience.' —'But,' answered the Saint smilingly, 'that good person and myself might be described as bodies in the world, and yet we never lost our patience.' Then, sitting down to table, he continued his gentle teasing : 'Do you know, brother,' he said, 'that there is somewhere in the world a person whom you have made very happy? Guess who she is.' The Bishop of Chalcedon suggested several people. 'No, not that one,' answered Francis to each name mentioned by his brother. 'But who is it, then?'—'Why, it is the lady who would have been your wife, if you had been married. Look you, my dear brother,' he went on seriously, 'we bishops must never refuse our help to anyone if we are to do our duty. We must be like those great public reservoirs to which everyone has a right of access, whither not only men, but animals and even reptiles may come to slake their thirst.'"*

It would seem, however, that the Bishop of Chalcedon eventually managed to mitigate what may be called the Saint's excesses of charity : for the latter humbly consented to somewhat stricter regularity as to meal times and to a greater care for his health. In writing to Mother de Chantal about two of the Mother Superiors of her Institute, he says : "They are somewhat of the same disposition as their father (alluding to himself) and are rather inclined towards obligingness as regards the calls of visitors : but it will be easy to moderate this in part ; to change it altogether would be impossible. The Bishop of Chalcedon has corrected me in this matter and we live more according to rule, but I still manage to offend occasionally, and although my offence is slight, nevertheless, on account of my past record, a single fault is counted at three times its actual guilt." And again in September : "We live according to rule as to our meals, and I no longer write in the evening, as my eyesight will not allow it, nor indeed my digestion. So it will not be my fault if I do not live to a green old age."†

For some time past the Duke of Savoy had been intending to send his son, Cardinal Maurice of Savoy, on a second journey to Paris, and it had been decided that Francis should accompany him. The death of Pope Paul V on January 28, 1621, put an end to this project, as the Cardinal found himself obliged to hasten Romeward for the conclave. "Just as I was writing to you," says the Bishop in a letter to a correspondent, "I received your letter and parcel of

* Hamon, Tom. II, l. vi. chap. 9, p. 267 *et seq.*

† E. N., Tom. XX, Lettres MDCCCIX and MDCCCXXXII.

January 30, with the news of the Prince Cardinal's unexpected departure for Rome, whither, as soon as I learned yesterday of the Pope's death, I thought he would go for the new election of another pope, in which business he was likely to be of more use the sooner he got there. And so, popes die just like the poorest of people: and so also the journey to France is altogether stopped, or put off for a long time. Indeed, if my prayers were heard, it would be altogether stopped by the promotion of the Prince Cardinal to the papacy, and this, not because I have the honour to be his very obedient servant, but because of the benefit which, I am sure, would accrue therefrom to the whole of Christendom. But the providence of God will preside over all things, and give us, if he so wills, a good pope." As a matter of fact, Maurice of Savoy arrived too late for the conclave, and, so far from being made Pope himself, had no share even in the election of Gregory XV.*

In a letter written to Mother de Chantal, we have a few lines indicating that even great saints succumb at times to the tyranny of tired nature. We are so inclined to look upon them as a kind of higher being that we often forget that they had to struggle against the same difficulties as ourselves. "Certainly, my very dear mother, it is necessary to repeat those psalms which will have been said whilst you were asleep, and to mention in confession that you did not supply them: for these are notable parts of the Office which you are obliged to say, but not if it is only a question of three or four verses."†

During this period the Saint's health was none too good; he describes himself to a friend as "burdened with age and with indisposition" such as hindered him from doing all that he desired. Nevertheless he continued to work as best he could, assisting his brother in his new office, encouraging the Barnabite fathers by being present at their Lenten sermons at the college, preaching there himself, attending their functions, social and ecclesiastical, saying Mass at the Visitation convent, transacting diocesan affairs such as the appointment of priests to vacant cures, working for the reformation of religious houses and for the introduction of the Oratorians at Thonon and Rumilly, and devoting much time to his ever-growing correspondence. "Everyone in need, everyone in distress had recourse to the Bishop of Geneva. He was known to be held in high esteem at the courts of sovereign powers, favoured by people of importance; particularly was he known to be kind-hearted and incapable of refusing the often thankless rôle of petitioner. Never-ending were the demands made upon his charitable pen—plaintiffs in legal cases, needy or disgraced noblemen, converts,

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCLVIII, p. 20.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCLIX, p. 21.

candidates for the religious life, all desired to obtain his help in support of their requests."*

It is evident from his correspondence that towards the end of March he went once more to Lyons, probably to mitigate the opposition aroused in that city against the silk manufactories initated in his diocese by the Franciscans. It was from Lyons, on March 25, 1621, that he wrote a letter indicating to the Superior of a Visitation convent that his daughters should undertake educational work. "I cannot believe," he says, "that my Lord the Bishop wants to burden you with the education of lay children after a humble remonstrance on your part that it would seriously upset your House, utterly unsuited, as it is, for this work. For, really and truly, experience has proved at Annecy that your manner of life is almost incompatible with such a task. However, if his mind is very strongly set upon this, you might, in these days of beginnings, take in as many as three children only, and put one of the sisters over them, but no more. Nor should this be continued in the future. Your spiritual father, your confessor, and the good fathers who are there and who have kindly feelings for your house, will manage with all gentleness to free you from this hindrance."†

On April 20, as the Bishop was leaving the Visitation convent where he had said Mass for the nuns, he was met by a woman who was possessed by the devil. She begged him to free her from her slavery, and then fell to the ground in a horrible seizure. The Saint commanded her to get up and made her recite the *Our Father*, after which he gave her his blessing. From that moment she was delivered from her trouble. The sequel to this incident showed that even in his beloved Annecy Francis had to endure a certain amount of hostility from a section of his people. Whilst many indeed rejoiced on hearing of this miracle, there were a few who complained that the Bishop did these things out of ostentation, and that, if he must work miracles, he should do them in secret. Someone even went so far as to write a lampoon on the subject. When this was brought to the Bishop's notice, he remarked humbly: "These good people do not seem to have noticed that the woman said her *Our Father*, and that it was God, who, in answer to her prayer, *delivered her from her evil*, in order that she might not be *led into temptation* by the evil one. If we took care to say that prayer, in accordance with the spirit and intention of Jesus Christ, we should find therein a cure for all our evils. And indeed, I myself now find in it the remedy for this lampoon, by saying: *Lord, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*."‡

Towards the end of the month of May Francis writes to Mother

* E. N., *avant-propos*, Tom. XX, p. viii.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCLXIX, p. 35. ‡ *Pouvoir*, p. 31.

de Chantal, to tell her that he had finished revising the *Directories* of the institution and was then engaged in the same task with the *Constitutions*. "Since Easter," he says, "I have suffered continual indispositions, but I see no remedy for them nor are they dangerous. They have now passed away, thanks be to God, though I beg of him to send them back to me whenever it shall so please him."*

For some time past the affairs of the Holy House of Thonon had been in a bad condition. In obedience to the commands of the Duke of Savoy and the Prince of Piedmont Francis made his way thither, accompanied by two officials of the Treasury, in order to enquire into the various troubles of the House and to supply a remedy. On Whitsunday, May 30, he confirmed more than 500 people. As a result of this visit, Francis reported to the Duke and his son that the eight priests of the church of Notre Dame were leading good lives, carrying out their parish duties, and fulfilling their obligations as to the celebration of daily Mass. The church, however, was not properly furnished, the divine Office was not recited as well as it should be, the buildings were in poor repair, and the finances of the institution badly managed. Most of these evils he ascribed to the fact that, as each priest drew a separate salary, there was not enough money, when wages and board were paid, to devote to general expenditure. Moreover, the clergy, being secular priests with a certain amount of independence, were not bound by that community life which would have reduced expenditure and resulted in a greater unity of action. The Bishop suggested, as a remedy to this state of affairs, the introduction into the Holy House of the Oratorian fathers—a plan which was very dear to his heart, but which he was never able to realize. A further trouble was that, owing to lack of funds, the establishment was not able to give a much-needed assistance to indigent converts, according to the original idea of its foundation. In another letter he advocated the interest of certain houses of nuns in his diocese, who were anxious for reform. With regard to the monks of Aulps, he declared that any reform was impossible, and recommended that both there and at Ripaille colonies of Carthusians should be installed.†

On the evening of August 19, 1621, Francis made his way to the Bernardine convent of St Catherine, which was situated at a short distance from Annecy. Many years before this date Abbot Boucherat, General of the Cistercian Order, had asked the Saint to take the house of St Catherine under his special care and to persuade the nuns to introduce reforms which were very necessary. Later on he received directions in the same sense from the Duke of Savoy. Consequently, his relations with the convent were frequent, the

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCXCVIII, p. 93.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 101 and 103.

more so that several of the sisters were connections of his family. Nevertheless, in spite of the tact and patience which he used towards them, he made very little headway in his efforts for reform, as the Abbess and a number of the older nuns were completely opposed to any change. Towards the end of the year 1620, however, it is clear that at least five of the sisters were anxious to second his desires, and were even impatient because he did not act sufficiently soon for their ardour. To complicate matters, it happened that by an accident the Abbess and her adherents discovered the existence in their midst of a reform party and of the encouragement given to the latter by Francis. Things went so far that some of the older nuns declared that the Bishop ought not to be allowed into the house again, and that, if he presented himself at their gates, these should be shut in his face. On hearing of this, the Bishop gently remarked: "Even if they closed the convent doors, they cannot also close the door of the church, and thither I will go and there we will talk together." However, things never actually went as far as the accomplishment of this threat, and on August 19 the Bishop was admitted to the convent, in order that he might preside over the celebration of St Bernard's feast the next day. It was on this occasion that he took his first decisive step. In the afternoon he had a conference with the whole community, in which he broached the question of reform, took the side of the five sisters, and talked of establishing the usual enclosure. "In that case, my Lord," said one of the oldest nuns, who was a relation of his, "I shall imitate the birds, and I shall peck so hard at the cage that eventually I shall get out." The Saint gently rebuked her for this outburst, reminding her that it was necessary to obey the orders of the Holy Father under pain of sin: he further suggested that perhaps, when he himself was dead, they would be sorry for their opposition, but that he hoped at any rate that they would say a little prayer for him. "No," said the inflexible lady, "not even a *Requiescat in pace*."—"Oh yes, aunt, you will," he answered, with a smile, "even if only out of charity and compassion." Others amongst the sisters now joined in the discussion. "They want to shut us up within four walls," said one, "and we shall all die of hunger."—"No," answered the Bishop, "Thanks be to God, this is not a time of plague or famine. Those who desire to restore the enclosure are wise. If they aim to restrict the body, it is not with any idea of causing it suffering, but simply as a help to the reformation of the soul." Unable to answer the reasons and arguments put forward by Francis in his discourse to them, one of the nuns could not refrain from making a hit at the Visitation Order. "When these orders that are being founded nowadays have lasted as long as ours, you will see them also deteriorate: when it has rained long

enough, the roof will rot and fall in."—" No, my daughter, do not say that," answered the Saint, " for they will always have strong pillars, which will hold them firm and unshakeable." At that moment the bell rang, bringing an end to the meeting. " See, my dear ladies," added the Saint, " how lightly time would pass if you were enclosed; for even only talking about it has made this last hour seem but a moment." For the time being, the Bishop left things as they were, content to advance slowly in such a difficult task, and left the community to think over his words at greater leisure.

Towards the end of September Francis received a visit from Antoine Favre who had come to Annecy for the baptism of his grandson. In a letter, dated the 21st, he says to Mother de Chantal: " Yesterday I received letters from Paris, but I had no time to see them, because of our troubles which kept me very late in the evening with the President, discussing several matters with him."* The troubles mentioned were connected with politics. Prince Thomas of Savoy had been recently appointed Governor of the country, and several of his actions had aroused the distrust of the Genevans, who had not forgotten the famous Escalade. The civic authorities of the city ordered a call to arms and wrote to Prince Thomas that, if he made any preparations for an attack upon them, they would forestall his action " by burning out and sacking His Highness' subjects." Such a threat naturally caused Francis the greatest anxiety for his people: happily the diplomatic skill of Antoine Favre averted the danger of hostility and restored peace.†

The Bishop's next public function was at Talloires, in connection with the relics of St Germain. This hermit had lived in the eleventh century. He had been sent from the abbey of Savigny to Talloires in order to restore a stricter observance in the priory. Having accomplished his work, he built a hermitage on the mountain above the village and spent the rest of his life in prayer, penance, and manual labour. In a former visit, which Francis had made to Talloires, he had ordered that the church of the hermitage should be repaired, and had promised that, when the work was done, he would come and translate the Saint's relics from the nave to the altar, where they would rest with greater honour. Accordingly he now fulfilled his promise, accompanied by the Bishop of Chalcedon, who officiated at the blessing of the church and the altar. Francis himself, during the whole of the ceremony, remained by the side of the ancient reliquary, lost in prayer, and indeed, on his own confession, wrapt in ecstasy. " Never, except once," he said to Father de Quoëx, " have I been filled with such deep spiritual consolation."

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCCXXXII, p. 153.

† See Mugnier's *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 478.

When Mass was ended, he opened the reliquary, exposed the relics for the veneration of the people, touched the bones of the Saint with rosaries, and finally placed them in a new case, which had been specially prepared for their reception. Then, aided by his brother, he carried this reliquary in procession round the hermitage, and finally placed it in its new resting-place under the altar. Then, filled with the thoughts inspired by his meditation, he went into the pulpit, and for two hours held his audience in rapt attention, while he spoke to them of the honour due to the saints and their relics and of the eminent virtues of St Germain himself.

Afterwards he visited the house of the hermitage, and was there invaded by a longing to come to this charming solitude in his old age and end his days there in imitation of the Saint. "Truly," he said, "I will choose this place for myself, in order to come and live here and find a little rest. If it please our Lord, I will leave the burden of the day and its heat to our Coadjutor, and then will give myself to the service of God and the Church with my rosary and my pen." Opening a window which looked out over the lake and town of Annecy, he stood there for a time admiring the beauty of the landscape. "What a lovely spot!" he exclaimed. "In this place surely the greatest and noblest thoughts would come to me thick as the falling snows in winter." After dinner, as he was going down the mountain, accompanied by his people, the weather suddenly changed, great masses of cloud gathered overhead, and it seemed certain that one of the terrible mountain storms was about to come down upon them. The people, afraid of being caught in such a place, crowded around their Bishop. For a moment he looked about him, then uttering a prayer to St Germain, he lifted his hand in benediction. Almost at once the clouds passed away, and the little flock of people made their way unharmed down to the village beneath them.* That evening Francis again went into the pulpit, this time in the village church, where the people had assembled to hear him. He repeated a certain amount of the instruction which he had already given at the hermitage, but also spoke of the system of canonization in the early Church and of the later rules which had been formulated for that process in more recent times. He concluded by exhorting them to have a great devotion to the Saint whom they had been honouring that day.

Before leaving Talloires Francis gave directions to the Prior de Quoëx to build five or six cells, whither he might retire some day to serve God in prayer and the writing of spiritual books. "I will use this time of rest for the glory of God and the instruction of his people, in committing to paper the things that have been in my mind these thirty years, and of which I have made use in my

* *Année*, July 13.

sermons, instructions, and private meditations. I have a great quantity of material in notes, and, apart from this, I hope that God will assist me with his holy inspiration. O who will give me the wings of the dove to fly to this sacred solitude and rest here for a time beneath the shadow of the cross? There will I await the time of my passing to the great eternity. *Expectabo donec veniat immutatio mea—I will wait until my change come.*"*

"As a matter of fact," says Hamon, "the Bishop had vast plans for his days of retirement. He wanted, first of all, to write a *History of Jesus Christ* in four books. The first would be a translation and harmony of the Four Gospels in chronological order; the second an exposition of the principal points of Catholic teaching, drawn from our Lord's words, as related in the Gospels; the third would deal with the Christian virtues and evangelical perfection according to the teaching of Jesus Christ; and the fourth would be a history of the primitive Church, of its constitution and sanctity, as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles. "And if any time is left over," he would add, "I will compose a similar work on the Epistles of St Paul." When all this was done, he wanted to write a book on the Love of our Neighbour, as a sequel to his work on the Love of God, and then a series of pastoral letters to parish priests. The General of the Feuillants, on hearing of these proposals, remarked: "That is a vast amount of work, my Lord, for one who is already well on in life and for a prelate who is not master of his own time."—"That is true, father," was the answer, "but to keep our minds occupied, we should always undertake more work than we can possibly do, and plan as if we had a long time yet to live, but we ought not to worry if the sudden approach of death hinders us from accomplishing even a part of it."†

It may be noticed here that, while the Saint himself was planning the composition of such serious devotional works, he was also encouraging others to produce good literature of a different type such as might perhaps make a more direct appeal to the people of his day. Thus, in a letter, written possibly to M. Pierre Jay, he says: "I must tell you that the knowledge I gain every day of the world's present tendencies makes me desire passionately that the divine Goodness would inspire someone of his servants to write in accordance with the taste of that poor world. I mean to say, Sir, that if it pleased you to follow your line and treat of pious and holy things in an agreeable manner, and with historical method, such as would charm somewhat the intellectual curiosity of this age, it would withdraw them, or, at least, would divert them a little, from the

* See C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 224 of vol. ii. Hamon quotes dep. of Gard, Myucet, and Darit.

† C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 224 of vol. ii.

reading of books like the *Amadis*, from novels, and so many other inanities, and they would unconsciously swallow the attractive hook which would pull them out of the sea of sin into the boat of virtue. After all, Sir, we are fishermen—and *fishers of men*. We ought then to use in our fishing not only care and labour and watching, but also attractions, ingenuities, baits, yes, even I venture to say, a kind of holy ruse. The world has become so delicate that henceforward one only dares to touch it with scented gloves and dress its wounds with perfumed plasters. But what matter, provided men are cured and, at the end of all things, saved? Our Queen, divine charity, does all things for her children. And so take courage, Sir, and follow the inspiration of the great and attractive genius which inspires you."*

On leaving Talloires, Francis passed across the lake in order to visit Mme. de Menthon, an old friend of his whose health was declining beneath the weight of years. During their conversation on spiritual matters, the Bishop suddenly remarked: "Madame, we are getting old: it is time for us to concentrate our minds on the next life."—"It is true, my Lord, that I am old. At my age of seventy-two years I ought only to think of death, and my death will be no loss, for I am of no use in this world. But you, my Lord, you are necessary to the Church, and God has many years yet in store for you."—"You are mistaken, Madame. I shall be the first to go and you will follow me." The words were prophetic.†

On the feast of All Saints Francis officiated and preached in his pro-cathedral, and two days later fulfilled the same functions at the college of Annecy. On November 8, Prince Thomas, Lieutenant-General of Savoy, arrived in the city and stayed three or four days at the Bishop's residence, where he received the official visits of the syndics and other civic notabilities. This visit was the occasion of a letter to Mme. de Charmoisy, whose son was at this time attached to the Prince's suite, and, as the missive shows our Saint in a new light, we quote it in full. "I wrote to you the day before yesterday, my very dear cousin and daughter. But now I must needs be a little bit vexed with you, for the reason that my nephew is not supplied with clothes suitable to his rank or to his present service: in addition to the fact that this causes him considerable embarrassment, seeing all his companions better provided than himself, it is also a subject of criticism on the part of his friends, some of whom have spoken to me about it with no little heat. There is no help for it, my very dear daughter; when one is in the world, one must observe all the rules of that world, in all that is not contrary to the law of God." The Saint, in a postscript, adds: "My Lord the

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCLXIX, p. 219.

† C. A. de S., l. ix^me^, p. 226 of vol. ii.

Prince finds this place much more pleasant than Chambéry and is thinking of coming here very often by way of a change."*

The next day Francis must have devoted much of his time to his correspondence, for some six letters of this date have been preserved. The first was a very long one to Mother de Chantal, dealing with matters of business in connection with the Visitation and with messages for his friends in Paris. Another fairly long letter was addressed to his old college friend, Father Binet, the Jesuit, about Mother Angélique Arnauld's desire to enter the Visitation. As Francis has been accused by some of trying to entice this lady into his Order and blamed by others for not letting her enter it, this letter is of some importance.

"My Reverend Father,

"Thanking you many times for the trouble you have taken in writing to me, I will say in reply, that, when I was in Paris, I would never consent to the desire which Madame de Port Royal communicated to me of withdrawing from the Order in which she had lived so usefully up to then, and in truth I brought back to this country not the slightest thought of any such thing. But, time and again, I received by letter many pressing representations, urging me to sanction her ideas and approve of her desires. I evaded the matter as much as I could, and not only showed myself cold, but altogether opposed to her proposals: until, at the end of eighteen months, a person of considerable standing† wrote to me in such a way that I decided not to make myself the final judge in the business, but to leave the ultimate decision to the course of events. I abstained, therefore, from advising her, and wrote to her that, since her heart found no rest in all that I had said and written to her, she might arrange to forward" (to Rome) "a petition embodying her wishes. That, if His Holiness granted her application, there would be an apparent probability that her desire is the will of God, considering that, as the thing is of itself difficult, it could not obtain success without special assistance from the divine goodness. That if, on the contrary, His Holiness refused her request, there would be nothing else left for her to do but to be humble and to quieten the movements of her heart. That, reverend father, is as far as I have gone.

"I saw, indeed, that this desire was extraordinary, but I also saw an extraordinary character; I saw indeed the tendency of this heart to rule, but I also saw that it was in order to destroy this tendency that she wanted to bind herself to obedience; I saw indeed that she is but a girl, but I saw that she had been more than

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCXLVI, p. 172.

† Mother de Chantal.

a girl in authority and command, and that she might be just the same in the excellence of her obedience.

" As to the Visitation's interests, indeed, reverend father, I protest before God and your reverence that I never thought of them, or that, if I did think of them, it was so little that I have forgotten it. I confess that I have a special love for the Institute of the Visitation : but Madame de Chantal, your dear daughter and mine, will tell you that I would not on that account lead away from her vocation the most excellent and most reputable person in the world, even if there was a certainty that she would become a canonized saint in the Visitation. I rejoice when God draws good subjects into it, but I have never employed either word or ingenuity, even with the holiest intention, to attract anyone, except it be a few feeble prayers in the presence of God. . . ."*

In a letter of this date the Saint informs Mother Favre, Superioress of Montferrand, that she is destined to found a new house at Dijon. This project, however, was considerably delayed by unexpected opposition, and it was not until September 8, 1622, that Mother Favre went to that town.†

On November 24, Francis once more made his way to the abbey of St Catherine. After greeting all the sisters, he withdrew at eventide to a little chapel, where for a long time he heard confessions. After his supper he gave a spiritual conference to the boarders of the convent, questioning them upon the principles of Christianity and developing still further their answers. The next morning he rose early to hear the confessions of the convent servants, celebrated Mass, gave Holy Communion to all those present, and then, after his thanksgiving, went up into the pulpit. During the course of this sermon he said : " If a young lady were to ask me how she could save her soul while staying in the world, I would answer that she would infallibly gain salvation if she kept the commandments of God. But if a nun were to ask me the same question, I would say in addition : ' If you belong altogether to God, you will most assuredly be saved, for this heavenly King wills all or nothing. He wishes to reign absolutely, like the sovereign King that he is, who must be all-powerful within us, while we on our part must be submissive to his will. It will not be God alone who will judge monks and nuns ; the particular saints of their orders will also judge them with him, saying to them : *We had the same bodies as you had, we were subject to the same weaknesses : nevertheless we advanced courageously and perseveringly along the same path which our divine Master had broken for us.*' " At the end of the

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCCXLVIII, p. 183.

† *Ibid.*, p. 191 and note iii, p. 182.

sermon he exclaimed: "It is better, my dear children, that our hearts should be hard rather than lukewarm, for the hardened of heart are at least known to all, and an effort is made to withdraw them from this miserable state. But as to the lukewarm, God cannot endure them, but, as he has said himself, begins *to vomit them out of his mouth*."

During his stay at the convent he practised the generosity that he preached. Amongst other things he gave up the comfortable bed that had been prepared for him to his servant, and himself slept in the one prepared for the latter. All the time, too, he was quietly working at the complete reform of the convent: to some five or six sisters who were anxious to follow his lead, he said at his departure: "Well, sisters, begin as soon as possible. Afterwards you will perhaps help others. But nevertheless go to work quietly and without hurry."*

On November 28, 1621, Francis wrote a letter to Sister de Blonay, in which he alludes to the sufferings of the new Visitation convent at Valence. The house in which the foundresses were first lodged was small and inconvenient: they were obliged to sleep in the attics, immediately under the tiles, exposed to draughts and even to the rain; the garden was so small that there was scarcely room to walk in it; and the water supply was so bad that during the hottest season of the year the sisters had not enough to quench their thirst. Under the circumstances it was not surprising that sickness invaded the little community: the Mother Superior, Claude Marie de la Martinière, nursed her daughters heroically, but, worn out with fatigue, she herself fell sick of a fever and became so ill that the doctors gave up hopes. Happily, however, she recovered.†

Alluding to these things, Francis wrote: "In accordance with your letter of the 14th, dear daughter, we had already turned our thoughts to the choice of a superior for Valence; but God be praised that now there will be no need for this, since by our Lord's mercy she who is there at present is out of danger . . . and I am very consoled by what you tell me—that she and her companions are so ready to suffer for our Lord, who will have given them this courage along with many other virtues."

Later on, in the same letter, the Saint, evidently in answer to questions, gives a little treatise on faith. "The truths of the faith are sometimes acceptable to the human mind, not only because God has revealed them by his word and taught them by his Church, but because they appeal to our taste, because we grasp them well and understand them easily, and because they are in conformity with our inclinations. As for instance: that there is a Paradise after

* Pérennès, l. vii, p. 393 of Tom. II.

† Note i, p. 194 of Tom. XX, E. N.

this mortal life is a truth of the faith which many find quite to their whim, because in itself it is pleasant and desirable ; that God is merciful—this most people find very good and believe it easily, because philosophy itself teaches it to us : all this is in conformity with our tastes and desires. Now all the truths of faith are not of this sort : as, for instance, that there is an eternal hell for the punishment of the wicked ; this is a truth of faith, but a bitter, frightful, and terrifying truth, which we do not believe willingly, except by the power of God's word.

" And now, first of all, I will say that faith pure and simple is that by which we believe the truths of the faith, without considering any agreeableness, sweetness, or consolation which we may find in them, by the mere submission of our minds to the authority of God's word or the teaching of the Church : and in this way we believe the terrible truths just as firmly as those that are sweet and agreeable. And then our faith is pure, because it is not invested with any pleasure or delight ; it is simple because it is not mixed with any satisfaction on the part of our own feelings.

" Secondly, there are truths of the faith which we can apprehend by means of our imagination : such as that our Saviour was born in the crib at Bethlehem, that he was carried into Egypt, that he was crucified, that he ascended into heaven. There are others which we are utterly unable to grasp with our imagination : such as the truth of the most Holy Trinity, eternity, the presence of our Lord's body in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist ; for all these truths are true in a manner which is inconceivable to our imagination, inasmuch as we cannot imagine how such things can be, but nevertheless our mind believes them firmly and simply merely from the assurance which it has in the word of God. And that truth also is really pure, for it is destitute of all imagination ; and it is perfectly simple, because it is not accompanied by any other sort of action but that of our apprehension, which, purely and simply, embraces these truths on the mere guarantee of God's word. And it is this pure and simple faith which the saints have practised, and still practise, in the midst of sterility, dryness, distaste, and spiritual gloom." It is a passage like this, written in a letter on the spur of the moment, which brings out the Saint's peculiar power of teaching, and gives us an idea of how the ordinary people preferred his preaching to that of his more pretentious contemporaries.

During this advent of 1621 the affairs of the parish of Rumilly greatly occupied the Bishop's attention. On November 29 he wrote a letter to M. Jean Carron, secretary to the Prince of Piedmont, in which he says : " I am deeply grateful to you for the trouble you have taken in obtaining from His Most Serene Highness

an answer to my request about the introduction of the Oratorian fathers into Rumilly. I cannot describe how necessary it is that they should come. For, bethink you, Sir, that in this one church there are four different kinds of ecclesiastics: (1) the Prior, who is a religious of the Order of Cluny, depending on the priory of Nantua, which belongs at present to France; (2) the secular sacristan, a dependant of the Priory; (3) the parish priest and the curate; and (4) five or six Altarians, who form a small body apart.

"It is unbelievable how much trouble this little composite group has given me during the last twenty years, by reason of the perpetual lawsuits and altercations amongst them, such as cause great scandal to the people. Now by the introduction of the Oratory Fathers this church would be unified, and would be served in a united spirit of peace and gentleness: for the Fathers of the Oratory are not like other religious, who cannot take charge of parishes. Moreover, they are not exempt from the jurisdiction of the bishops, but remain under episcopal rule as parish priests; so that there is no need, in case of disorder, to go outside the country, in order to recall them to their duty. I might mention that there are already some very good ecclesiastics in the country who are only awaiting the coming of the Fathers in order to join their congregation.

"Moreover, M. de Saunaz (one of the ecclesiastics in question), the son of that M. de Saunaz who was hanged in Geneva when serving His Highness at the time of the Escalade, is finishing his noviciate with the same Congregation at Christmastide, and is extremely anxious that his priory of Chindrieu should be united with the church of Rumilly for this good work. And as to the Prior of Rumilly, some satisfactory arrangement might be made with him."

The Bishop concludes his letter by suggesting that the proposed changes would make Rumilly independent of the French houses of Cluny and Nantua, which would be an excellent thing from a merely political point of view. In which suggestion and in his allusion to the Escalade he shows his thorough acquaintance with the character of Charles Emmanuel of Savoy.*

December 8 was the anniversary of Francis' consecration. "Ah indeed, dear daughter," he writes to one of the Visitation sisters, "if I looked only at my conscience, this day would be one of great confusion for me and worthy of tears, rather than of your congratulations. But God is good: he sees the greatness of my burden and the futility of my powers. For that reason I say with St Ambrose: I do not fear with a fear that deprives me of courage, for the very reason that I have a good Master. My daughter, love me well always with all our dear sisters, and beg the divine Providence to be ever more and more merciful towards me for the

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCLVII, p. 200.

forgiveness of my faults in the past and more and more propitious for my amendment in the future."*

Although the Saint's biographers tell us that during this winter his health was far from good, he himself in a letter written on December 15 tells Mother de Chantal that he was particularly well at that moment. One is inclined to think that the optimism of this assertion sprang rather from the Bishop's courage and his disregard of what he considered to be trifling and inevitable ailments at his time of life. In this same letter we learn of the death of Mme. des Gouffiers. This good lady, who was one of the benefactors of the Visitation, had nevertheless given endless trouble both to Francis and to Mother de Chantal. Her last days, however, were very edifying. She contracted a fever when working for the prisoners of the galleys, and, after having suffered with great gentleness, patience, and resignation, died a holy death in complete union with the will of God. "Truly," wrote Mother de Chantal, "her death has deeply touched my heart."†

On the feast of our Lord's Nativity the Bishop preached in his cathedral. "I had a very large congregation yesterday," he afterwards wrote, "such as was really very wonderful; and I think that God will have blessed my words. To-day, with the help of divine grace, I hope to speak of the conformity of our wills with the eternal will of God."‡

Amongst the Saint's letters of this period, the dates of which it has been impossible to determine with certainty, are one or two which have a special interest. One in particular gives a vivid picture of a salient trait of his character: it was written to Mother de Chantal. "In obedience to your order, I have written affectionately to our Sister N., and I assure you, my very dear Mother, that I did so with all my heart, for it is with a perfect heart that I love that poor child. But truly, it is wonderful, there is not a soul in the world, I think, whose affection is warmer, more tender, and, to speak quite plainly, more loving than mine: for it has pleased God thus to make my heart. But nevertheless I love independent and vigorous souls and such as are not effeminate: for there is a certain great sensibility of affection which disturbs the heart, vexes it, and distracts it from loving prayer with God, hinders entire resignation and the complete suppression of self-love. That which is not God, is nought for us." The Saint ends by saying, "I love nought but God, and all souls for God's sake."§

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCCLVIII, p. 203.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCCLXIII and note, p. 210.

‡ *Journal*, Dec. 25, 1621. It must be noted, however, that this letter is not given by the E. N. as belonging to this date.

§ *Ibid.*, Lettre MDCCCLXVII, p. 216.

Another letter forms part of some written instructions given to a young nobleman who had sought his advice. According to Father Nicolas Talon, this gentleman had complained to Francis that he had no inclination for virtue. "Well," said the Bishop, "let us suppose that you have even a great aversion for virtue. I assure you, nevertheless, that it is within your power to change your natural character, and that, provided you do what I tell you, you will find no difficulty in becoming what you ought to be and in acquiring the sanctity that is suitable to your state of life."* This direct and uncompromising attack upon a common and pernicious theory was typical of St Francis' methods: his gentleness and sympathy did not prevent him from being drastic when such a course was necessary. He knew that there is no greater enemy to virtue than the preconceived notion that the will, even when aided by grace, is helpless against natural defects: we can imagine how strenuously he would have opposed the modern heresy which grants excessive powers to hereditary influences and the physical qualities of the body. In the present letter he thus continues his instruction of this young nobleman: "I beg you," he writes, "often to recall to your mind and to keep before your eyes what the all-wise goodness of God has willed to achieve in your soul and through your instrumentality by giving you wealth, favour, and authority.

"As a rule princes and great lords are granted at birth all that the ordinary people are forced to acquire with much labour. And even if they be lacking in some way, they can do all in him who has given them all, and they only need to exercise their wills to gain sufficient strength for anything. But, in order that their wills be more fully conformed with the standard of all good will, their perfection must consist in willing only what God wills. Now, what is true is that God only desires of a prince that, while ruling all his subjects with fear and love, he himself should love and fear God with a filial fear and with a pure, holy, and generous love. Often their indulgence is mere cruelty and their justice a great mercy. Their example is the point on which depends the welfare and the misfortune of the people, and consequently they all ought to say with Trajan: 'I must be such a prince towards my subjects as I should desire to have over me myself, if I were a subject.'

"In the same way also, since each lord and each nobleman is a small monarch in his own house, they must not forget the words of the Apostle: *Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven*, and a master of kings on the earth, upon whom you can depend. They must not therefore play the lion in their homes, shocking their servants

* *Vie de Saint Francis de Sales* par le Pere Nicolas Talon (Lyon, 1837), p. 123.

and oppressing their retainers ; but their piety and sense of duty must be generous, and their courage full of mercy and goodness. That is their first lesson, in which they will learn to render to God and to their king all the duties of their fealty and to their subjects all the offices of a power, which should only be exercised in justice and goodness." If this gentleman was, as some suppose, M. Albert de Genève-Lullin, then the Saint's counsels bore ample fruit, for he is described as being a valiant soldier, admirably loyal to his sovereign, kind to his subjects, and a faultless Christian.*

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MDCCCLXXII, p. 224, and note.

CHAPTER XIII*
(1621–1622)

The Saint's health failing—He visits Thonon—During Lent preaches at the Visitation—Undertakes education of Charles Auguste de Sales—Letter of intercession for a criminal and another about the special work of the Visitation—Francis goes to Pignerol for the Chapter of the Feuillants—Then to Turin, where he falls ill—Foundation of the reformed Bernardines at Rumilly—Francis returns to Annecy—Continued illness during the journey—Letters to the Abbess of St Catherine and St Jane Frances—Death of Mme. Brulart and of Cardinal de Retz—Letter to the Visitation of Nevers on meekness—A new house at Belley—The Saint helps the Bernardines—Letter about the parish of Rumilly—Visit to Belley—Letter to Father de Bérulle—Francis goes to Rumilly to visit the Bernardines—Poverty in Annecy due to the billeting of troops—The Saint's last ordination and a miracle.

ALTHOUGH Francis had declared in mid-December that he was "particularly well," it is evident that at the beginning of the year 1622 his health was very far from good. His old trouble with his legs had returned: they were very much swollen and even covered with sores. He was continually in a state of pain on their account, and at times could scarcely stand or walk. To these troubles were added violent pains in his head, back, and other parts of his body. He made light of them to his friends and qualified them as inevitable. "It needs must be that many ills come beforehand as heralds of the last of all ills," he would say. All through his pain and weakness he preserved the same patience and cheerful kindness to those around him: illness never induced in him that touch of irritability which it so often provokes in sufferers of less heroic mould. Moreover he continued to exercise all his former austerity towards himself. Although the winter of that year was exceptionally cold, and although his underclothing was ragged, patched, and worn out, utterly insufficient to protect him properly, he refused to have anything new made for him. He cherished this poverty as an imitation of the poverty of Jesus Christ and as a means of enabling him to give just a little more charity to the poor people around him, many of whom were indeed suffering both from the severity of that season and from the failure of recent harvests.

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 10.

Towards the end of January he made his way to Thonon, partly to officiate at the wedding of M. Albert de Genève-Lullin and partly to devote his attention to the affairs of the Holy House. On his return journey, when he called at Brens upon his cousin, Gaspard de Sales, he was so weak that he could scarcely stand.* During the following Lent he preached every Thursday at the Visitation and attended the sermons of the Lenten Station given either by his brother or by the Barnabites.

About this time he undertook a task which was very congenial to his affectionate nature and which gave him great consolation in the midst of his trials. This was the education of Charles Auguste de Sales, who was the son of his beloved brother Louis, and whom he now took to live with him as a member of his household. The Bishop had always felt the greatest interest in this child: he had blessed the babe as yet unborn, pronouncing over him, as Charles Auguste himself has recorded, "words of fair omen"; later on, when, through the carelessness of a nurse, the boy was condemned to perpetual lameness, Francis consoled the parents by assuring them that their child should be his well-beloved Jacob—in allusion to that patriarch's affliction, and averred furthermore that Almighty God held in store for him the blessing of heaven and earth. Charles Auguste gave early evidence of a studious disposition: having persuaded a servant to teach him his alphabet, he set himself to read the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, a work which he finally studied so thoroughly that he practically knew it by heart. One day, when he was still only eight years old, he came in great distress to the Bishop and said: "I am ashamed, uncle, of being so little worthy of being your nephew. I know nothing at all, and, unless you come to my help, I am likely to remain utterly ignorant all my life. For father is so occupied with business, that he has no time to think of me." Both his father and his uncle were delighted—and probably somewhat amused—at the child's thirst for education, and they at once proceeded to fulfil his desires by placing him under the best masters they could find. The Bishop himself attended to his spiritual development, and the boy made rapid progress both in his studies and his religion. Francis was quick to see that his nephew was possessed of exceptional character and abilities. "That child is born for great things," he remarked, "and it is God's good pleasure that such a valuable plant should be carefully cultivated." To the boy himself he said: "Remember, my dear child, that God has chosen you to be a vessel of grace, and that, if you are faithful in following his cause, he will make a great use of you for his service." It was not long before Charles gave striking proof of his talents; at the age of fourteen on the occasion of some academical assembly, he

* *Journal*, p. 298.

pronounced a discourse which gained the greatest applause both from his uncle and his audience, and during the next year he distinguished himself again by composing a striking panegyric on St Paul. Francis was rapidly coming to the conclusion that his nephew was plainly destined for the ecclesiastical state, and he eventually decided to confer on him the tonsure. It was at this time that he said to his brother Louis: "If God wills that that child, who is yours by nature and mine by love, should live a long time, I would like to instil into his mind everything that God's goodness and grace have put into mine." On another occasion, during some theatricals at the college, Charles was given the part of a courtier, who, having been converted from a careless life, was heard to deplore with bitterness the waste of his early years in the vanities of the world: the young actor pronounced his part with such vigour and sincerity as to make his uncle realize that, in saying his part, he was, in reality, only expressing his own views on the folly of a merely mundane life. That evening, when he gave the boy his blessing, he said to him: "You spoke well to-day, my child. When once we have had the happiness to give ourselves to God, it would be a cowardly and unworthy action to leave his service for anything on earth."

Unfortunately the young ecclesiastic was not destined to enjoy for long the society and guidance of his saintly uncle, for death was soon to part them. Nevertheless he remained faithful to the influence of his early years, and in after times became an ardent apostle amongst the Calvinists. He eventually followed his great model in becoming Bishop of Geneva, and, in concert with St Jane Frances de Chantal, wrote a life of St Francis which formed the basis of all future biographies and which is still in many ways one of the truest pictures of a great life.

In one of the Saint's letters, written during the month of March to Prince Thomas of Savoy, is an interesting reminder of a privilege granted to the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, founded by Francis when he was Provost of Geneva. "My Lord," he wrote, "It pleased His Highness to grant to the Confraternity of the Holy Cross . . . the freedom of one imprisoned criminal, whomsoever it might nominate each year on Maundy Thursday, in honour of the death and Passion of our Lord. The unfortunate family of a man belonging to this district of Annecy has succeeded in obtaining his nomination for a pardon this year by the said Confraternity, so that he might be liberated from prison: and because truly, my Lord, his wife and numerous children are worthy of compassion, and because, by granting grace to the father, you will also be granting it to the children, the wife, and the whole family, who cannot live without this poor man's actual assistance, I join my own humble

petition to the respectful recommendation which the Confraternity is addressing to Your Highness in this connection."*

Some time previously to this month of April, 1622, a certain noble lady in France desired to found a house of the Visitation at Macon, but she unfortunately suggested such difficult conditions as the price of her benefaction that the founders were unable to accept her offer. It was in allusion to this matter that Francis wrote the following letter, which was addressed to Mother de Blonay at Lyons and in which Francis once more describes the object of his Order. "Briefly," says the Saint, "I can only say that souls who are so happy as to want to use the means which God has given them for the furtherance of his glory, must definitely decide upon their intentions and must be prepared to carry these out in conformity with that end. If they are inspired to found a Carthusian monastery, they must not try and found a school on the lines of the Jesuits; if they want to build a Jesuit college, they must not expect that solitude and silence will be observed therein.

"If this good lady, whom you have not named, wishes to erect a monastery of Visitation sisters, she must not burden them with long vocal prayers nor with a number of exterior observances; for this is not asking for the daughters of the Visitation. It ought to be enough, in my opinion, that everything in the daughters of the Visitation, both internal and external, is consecrated to God; that they are victims of sacrifice and living holocausts; that all their actions and resignations are so many prayers and petitions; that all the hours of their day, even those of sleep and recreation, are dedicated to God, and are so many fruits of charity. All this merit employed for the benefit of her soul, and the glory which accrues to God from the retreat of so many daughters being dedicated towards the increase of grace in her heart, forms an almost infinite sum of spiritual riches. That is my opinion.

"To burden the convents of the Visitations with observances which would distract them from the object for which God has disposed them, would, I think, be quite wrong. To want to gather olives from a fig tree or figs from an olive tree is an absurdity. Let him who wants figs, plant fig trees; and him who wants olives, plant olive trees."†

In the meantime the Visitation Order was progressing in a wonderful manner, in spite of difficulties and a certain amount of petty opposition due to jealousy. In February Mother de Chantal had been able to leave the Parisian house to itself; passing by way of Orleans, Bourges, Nevers, and Moulins, at each of which towns she stopped for a while, she went to Allonne, there to await the sisters

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMIV, p. 285.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MDMVI, p. 288.

whom the Bishop was sending to her for the foundation of a new house at Dijon. Plans were also maturing for houses in other cities, notably at Chambéry and Turin.

On May 16, 1622, Francis received a brief from Pope Gregory XV, commanding him to go to Pignerol, there to preside over a Chapter of the Feuillants on the 30th of that month. The Order of Feuillants was an offshoot of the Cistercian Order, and the Chapter in question was one of considerable importance: amongst other matters it was to decide the election of a Superior General, about which election, it was feared, there might be cause of friction between the French and Italian members of the assembly. In obedience to the Pope's desires, Francis at once began to prepare for this new journey. His relatives and friends, knowing that he was really in a very bad state of health, did everything in their power to dissuade him from the undertaking. He refused, however, to act upon their suggestions. "I must obey," he told them. "God did not find me worthy of dying amongst the heretics for the faith or amongst the plague-stricken for charity: how happy I should be, if I were to die for obedience! I have only a short time now to live and must hasten to do all the good I can: there is nothing better that I can do than obey." Accordingly he left Annecy on May 24, making his way to his brother's château of La Thuille. Already he was aware of his failing strength: placing his hand on his breast, he said to his sister-in-law, Madeleine de Rouer: "I feel something here which means that I have not long to live." Nevertheless he continued his journey, and crossing Mont Cenis, arrived at Pignerol during the last week of May.

The Chapter opened on the appointed day, May 30, and continued its deliberations until June 19. Thanks, in great part, to the skill with which Francis guided the discussions, everything seems to have proceeded smoothly and successfully. "He listened," writes M. Hamon, "with gentleness and patience to everything which the delegates had to say, and on every point gave such judicious and practical answers in such a kind and tactful manner, that all present were moved to admiration. He treated everybody with honour and respect, gave the closest consideration even to the smallest details, and settled everything with the same earnestness and zeal, simplifying the most complicated difficulties, finding remedies for the most desperate evils, and pacifying every objection. So wonderfully did he satisfy the minds of all present that Dom Jean de Saint-François, the most eminent man of the Order, speaking of the manner in which Francis fulfilled his mission at this time, said that 'everyone had been forced to admire in him an altogether superior mind, skilful in dealing with the gravest matters, deliberate in judgement, and wise in decision, to which was added

an incomparable kindness of heart, deep learning, and an unusual gift of spiritual enlightenment.' Thanks to his exceptional wisdom and skill in dealing with the minds of others, Francis triumphed over all difficulties; the Feuillants obeyed him as if he were the envoy of Almighty God; he restored perfect order into all their affairs, both spiritual and temporal, and had a great part in the final election of Dom Jean de Saint-François as Superior General."*

This was not the only work which the Saint accomplished at Pignerol. Although there were no Chapter meetings on the Sundays, and although he was badly in need of rest, he refused himself the slightest leisure or repose. In accordance with desires expressed by Cardinal Borghese, commendatory Abbot of Pignerol, by His Eminence's Vicar General, and by the Papal Nuncio, he exercised his episcopal functions in the administration of the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders: he also preached and heard confessions. The result was inevitable: on June 12, after being in the church for several hours on end, overpowered by heat and weariness, he fainted away. For a short time the fathers were afraid that his life was in danger, but to their joy he presently recovered consciousness, only to complain, however, that he was a poor servant indeed for one who had been crowned with thorns. Then he insisted on continuing his work amongst the people. On another occasion, June 18, during a Chapter meeting, he was seized with such terrible pain and weakness that he was obliged to close the session and retire.

No sooner was his mission at Pignerol accomplished than he decided to go to Turin, whither the commands of Princess Christine and the desires of many other people had been calling him. He arrived at the city on June 20, and found that the Princess, wishing to do every honour to her chaplain, had ordered magnificent apartments to be prepared for him. From this and from similar favours Francis begged to be excused, and asked leave that he might take up his residence at the house of the Feuillants. This, however, put the good fathers into a difficulty, because, owing to certain special circumstances, they had nothing better to offer him than a very small cell, exposed to the full heat of the summer sun during the greater part of the day. They begged him therefore to accept elsewhere one of the numerous invitations which had been given to him. But the prospect of that cell delighted the Bishop. "Let me have the consolation," he said, "of living a few days with you as your brother, since that is what I am in reality."

The next day Francis spent a considerable part of his time in sending reports of the proceedings at Pignerol to five cardinals in Rome, who were interested in the matter and whose favour he desired to obtain on behalf of the monks. On the 22nd he also

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 10.

wrote his official report to Pope Gregory XV. "Having received letters from Your Holiness," he said, "appointing me to preside over the General Chapter of the Congregation of Feuillants, I immediately made my way to Pignerol, where the Chapter was held. A great number of matters, proposed from many different places, were settled and decreed: and finally, according to custom, a Superior General was appointed, everything taking place with such unanimity and charity, that nothing more admirable could be desired. And indeed there remains nothing further to wish for than that this union, or rather, this unity amongst the representatives of so many nations, which is worthy of all praise at present, may continue to merit that praise in the future.

"In my opinion this hope has every likelihood of being realized during the next three years for the reason that the Superior General who has been chosen is Brother Dom Jean de Saint-François. He is not only a man of remarkable and eminent learning, who by his many and varied works has done credit to the Church and has defended it successfully against heretics, but he is also one who is eminently prudent and thoroughly conversant with the management of affairs, and, what is most important, is deeply versed in piety and the science of the apostolate. Consequently there is every reason to believe that under his rule the whole congregation will produce still greater fruit from day to day."

He then goes on to mention one matter which, in his opinion, called for alteration. This was that they were using a Breviary which was in urgent need of correction and improvement, containing, as it did, unreliable and even foolish stories, badly written hymns and many obscurities. The greater part of the Chapter had realized this, but others, out of affection for their ancient and traditional work, were opposed to any change. As there had been such admirable unanimity amongst the fathers on all other points, he had not thought well to use his authority in this one matter, esteeming it better that the Holy Father himself should order the General to suppress the old Breviary, and adopt the one recommended to all monks by the Holy See. With this and the expression of his loyalty and good will to Pope Gregory himself, the letter ends.*

On the very day on which he wrote this report Francis fell seriously ill. The exact nature of his malady is not mentioned by his biographers, but he was confined to his bed for many days, and it was more than a fortnight before he was able to write a letter. The good religious nursed him with the greatest devotion, and, we are told, afterwards kept many things which he used in their house as relics. On June 24 they conferred on him a privilege which he

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXXVI, p. 324.

valued highly : this was the grant of letters by which he was affiliated to their Order.

In a letter, written on July 7 to the Bishop of Chalcedon, he tells the latter that he hopes to return in eight or nine days to Annecy. He also alludes to the affairs of the convent of St Catherine. Five of the nuns, finding that there was no hope of reform in that house, had determined to leave it, with the intention of opening a new foundation at Rumilly. Before Francis had left Annecy, they had informed him of their resolution, and he had sent them a message of approval, adding that in his opinion it was an advantageous thing that they should effect their purpose while he was away. On learning from his brother that the sisters had taken the first steps towards their new venture and had obtained approval, as well as promises of protection, from certain authorities, he answered : " I am very glad that the daughters of St Catherine have accomplished their business during my absence."*

For one reason and another, as well as on account of the state of his health, Francis was obliged to stay in Turin longer than he anticipated, and it was not until August 17 that he took formal leave of Princess Christine. As on a former occasion, so now, the Princess insisted on presenting the Bishop with a very valuable present, in the shape of a ring : he, on his part, accepted it with the same intention as before. Probably he felt less reluctance at receiving this gift because he knew that at the moment his beloved people were enduring the sufferings of a famine. It was this reason indeed that made him very anxious to return home. Meeting M. Jean de Corsier, a priest of the Holy House, just as he was leaving Turin, he said : " I am going away with great gladness, and am resolved, on reaching my diocese, to sell all that I have—mitre, crozier, clothes, plate—in order to assist my poor people." When he had gone a short way on his journey, his servant came to him in great consternation, to tell him that, though a thorough search had been made everywhere, the Princess' ring could not be found. Francis accepted the news of this loss with his usual calmness. " God be praised," he answered. " That ring was far too valuable for my use. Perhaps I might have set too great a store on such a precious jewel. If we do not find it, it only means that God wishes to spare us the trouble of using in almsgiving the money we should have obtained for it. Perhaps Providence intends it to make the fortune of some poor person who, finding it, will live in comfort on its price for the rest of his days. In which case I shall not think myself to have been a great loser thereby." As a matter of fact, the ring was not lost, but was afterwards found in a fold of the Bishop's clothes, and, as we shall see, had a valuable and somewhat amusing rôle in later history.

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXXIX, p. 334.

The crossing of Mont Cenis proved such a trial to Francis that he was obliged to rest a day at Argentine: in fact, according to the deposition of St Jane Frances, he was so ill at this time that his attendants were afraid he would die before reaching home. He recovered, however, sufficiently to continue his journey. The party stopped one night at the town of La Chambre, where they took lodgings at an inn. M. Michel Favre, the Bishop's chaplain, having left the house for some reason, found on his return that the landlord had removed his belongings from one room to another much less comfortable. The worthy chaplain at once took umbrage at this proceeding, and a lively altercation ensued between him and the landlord. In the midst of the quarrel the Saint made his appearance and gently corrected him. "M. Michel," said Francis, "so far from insisting on your luggage being returned to your other room, you ought to endure patiently that they should even be removed to one still less comfortable than this. Do you not remember that our Lord said: *If a man will contend with thee in judgement and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.*"*

The Bishop's first care on returning to Annecy was to find means of alleviating the sufferings of his people. He promptly sold the Princess' ring, in order to obtain funds for his charities. Hearing of this fact, some of his friends redeemed the trinket and restored it to him. He sold it again, and it was again brought back. And so it went on, until a nobleman was heard to remark that instead of being called the Princess' ring, it ought to be dubbed the ring of the beggars of Annecy.

On August 29, 1622, Francis wrote a letter, which is evidently an answer to complaints made by the Abbess of St Catherine as to what had happened during his absence. It will be remembered that as the older members of this community refused to undertake any serious measures of reform, five of the younger sisters had determined to leave St Catherine and begin a new life elsewhere. While feeling obliged to rebuke them occasionally for over-zeal and precipitancy in their conduct, Francis at heart was in sympathy with their ambitions. On August 2 two of the sisters had gone to Rumilly to make what preparations they could for the proposed foundation: two others joined them shortly afterwards, and finally Mlle. Peruccard de Ballon, who was the prime mover in the matter of reform, but who for a time had been held back by feelings of affection for the Abbess of St Catherine, also made her way to Rumilly. Naturally the Abbess found subject of complaint in these events. "My very dear cousin and daughter," wrote Francis, "I propose to give you a clear answer to your letter. It is true that for a long time past I have been aware of the desires which several of your daughters

* C. A. de S., l. x^me, p. 235 of vol ii.

entertained with regard to a reformation : and, in so far as my conscience allowed me, I have told you of this from time to time. But it is also true that I would have liked them to have exercised somewhat more patience, since we are soon to receive a general order for the reform of all the convents of this province, especially for those of women, amongst whom the slightest defects are more severely censured than are much greater faults amongst the men. . . . That there has been a certain amount of impatience, want of self-denial, disobedience, amour-propre, and imprudence, certainly cannot be denied ; but, for all that, the principal idea of this business is none the less good and in accordance with God's will. However many defects there may be in a good work, these do not destroy its essential excellence : from whatever direction good may come, we must welcome it. My own inclination was to delay this matter until an order about it came from Rome, so that there might be less opposition : the fervour of charity on the part of some, or, if you like, the ardour of self-will on the part of others, has resulted in the choice of another policy which seemed to them more direct. We must not for that reason reject it, but must help in every way which a sincere, genuine, and holy charity may suggest. And we must take care not to allow our interest and self-love to make use of our prudence against the will of the heavenly Spouse. But of all this we must talk, God willing, at greater length.

" My dear cousin and daughter, that this affair had been undertaken, I learnt the day before my departure from this town ; that it had been put into execution, I heard at Argentine ; but you are the first to make me acquainted with the details, though since then I have learnt something more about it. It matters little that a good work be done in one way or another, provided that it be done in such a fashion that our Lord's greater glory be served thereby."*

On the next day Francis sent a letter to Mother de Chantal, which contains several interesting passages. The fact that, except for a few lines at the end, it was written by M. Michel Favre, makes one inclined to doubt its opening remark about his health.

" I have returned home, and am in good health, dear Mother, but have no leisure to make you a long discourse. . . . I am ready to believe, and indeed have seen it for myself, that Superiors are anxious to send away from their convents those subjects who are found to be disagreeable and peculiar, for it is human nature to enjoy only what is pleasant. But I am altogether of your opinion that we should not open the door for a change of convent in the case of those daughters who happen to desire it, but only in the case of those who, without desiring it themselves, shall be sent " (from one convent to another) " at the wish of a Superior : for otherwise the

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXXXVI, p. 347.

slightest discontent that might be experienced by a sister would be likely to upset and distract her, and, instead of effecting a change in herself, she would think she had sufficiently cured the evil by making a change of house."

The Saint's letters are generally full of praise for the spirit which reigned in the Visitation convents, but when they fell short of his ideals he was never afraid of expressing his dissatisfaction in the plainest of terms. We do not think it will do the memory of two saintly women any harm to quote the following passage, the more so that their fault was a fault of zeal rather than anything intrinsically wrong. After dealing with one small trouble, Francis continued: "I am much more scandalized at the dispute between the Superiors of Moulins and Nevers about a certain thousand crowns, which I could wish at the bottom of the sea rather than in the minds of our sisters. How is it possible that daughters of ours, reared in the school of the folly of Christ's cross, are so affected by the prudence of the world that neither one nor the other will give way and that each one manages to talk so much in terms of justice? . . ."

In this letter we also receive news of the death of Mme. Brulart, wife of the President of that name, one of the ladies to whom he had written many letters of spiritual guidance. "I could indeed have wished a longer life for Mme. the First President, my very dear daughter: but we must be silent and without complaint before the decree of heaven's will. I am consoled by the beautiful edification which she has left in the good example of her life—a life totally dedicated to the service of God, as I recognized from the very first moment that I had the happiness of knowing her."

Another death to which he alludes is that of Cardinal de Retz, who had tried so hard to persuade our Saint to stay in Paris as Coadjutor of that diocese. Of this prelate he says: "His death is a loss to the Church."*

As the Saint advanced towards the term of his own life the spirit of gentleness and humility seems to guide his own thoughts more and more, and he was ever pressing the counsel of these virtues upon his daughters as their most precious legacy. The Visitation of Nevers had suffered for some time from opposition on the part of another religious house and its foundress. Francis had already indicated to his daughters the policy he desired them to pursue, and the following letter was written to emphasize his former instructions:

"My Daughter,

"You must take the greatest care not to retaliate in any way whatsoever against these good sisters or their foundress, except with the most unchanging humility, gentleness, and simplicity of heart.

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMXXXVII, p. 349.

Not revenging yourselves, dear daughter: these are the very words of the Holy Spirit, written by St Paul. There sometimes come human temptations amongst the servants of God: if we are animated by love, we will suffer them in peace.

"If these good souls despise our Institute, because it seems to them to be inferior to theirs, they offend against charity, in which the strong do not despise the weak nor the great despise the small. It is true that they are more than you: but do the Seraphim despise the lesser angels? And in heaven, wherein is the image on which we ought to model ourselves, do the greater saints despise the less? But after all, when everything is said, he who loves the most will be the most beloved, and he who will have most loved will be the most glorified. Love God well, and, for God's love, love all his creatures, especially those who shall despise you, and do not be distressed.

"The evil spirit strives with might and main, because he sees that our little Institute is useful for God's service and glory, and he particularly hates it, because it is small and the least of all: for this Spirit is arrogant and hates littleness because it leads to humility—he, who has always loved haughtiness, pride, and arrogance, and who, because he would not remain in lowliness, lost thus his greatness. Work on in humility, nay even in abjection. Let them talk and act as they will. *Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* And if God builds it, in vain will they labour who strive to destroy it. God knows when and with what souls he will fill your convent."*

This month of August saw the foundation of a Visitation convent at Belley, whither Mgr. Camus had asked the Founders to send some of their sisters.

On September 11, 1622, Francis wrote to Mme. de la Fléchère promising to send two of the Visitation nuns to the reformed Bernardine house at Rumilly, in order that these sisters might help in the training of the new community. "Not only will we send two of our sisters for a month or two, if need be," he says, "but we will give these sisters everything that will be required for their support, so that they will be no expense to their hostesses. It seems to me that everything will go well."† This promise was fulfilled by Mother de Chantal, after the death of St Francis, in January, 1623. At the moment the Bishop's anxiety that the Bernardines should be spared all expense was all the more necessary, because during these first days the poor sisters were suffering all manner of hardships. They were, in fact, forced to write him a letter in which they described to him their need and begged his assistance. This letter was brought to Francis by an ecclesiastic who, though related to the Bishop,

* *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMXXXIX, p. 359. † *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMXLI.

seems to have borne some kind of a grudge against him. This person, while discharging his duty as courier for the nuns, took the opportunity to vent his spleen, and reproached Francis in the most unmeasured and disrespectful terms for having authorized the nuns to leave the abbey of St Catherine and for having thus exposed them to the hardships which they were at the time enduring. The Bishop made no direct answer to these reproaches. "My dear cousin," he said, "would you do me a little favour? These good sisters have a few possessions at the Visitation here. Would you be so kind as to send back your horse to-morrow bearing these things to the nuns? They are very poor, and it is only just to assist them." This unexpected answer from the man whom he had been insulting for the last few minutes completely upset the ecclesiastic's self-assurance, and he hastened to promise that the nuns should have every assistance which he could give them.*

A few days later Francis was again engaged with his plans to put the Oratorian fathers in charge of the district of Rumilly, having obtained the Duke's consent to the transference of certain benefices in their favour.† On the 24th he authorized the opening of a chapel dedicated to St Michael at Charmit in the parish of Abondance,‡ and on the same day wrote to Prince Victor Amadeus about the affairs of Contamine. In this letter he says: "My Lord, on my arrival home I found that the Superior and Sacristan of Contamine were about to fill the four prebends which Your Highness had ordered should remain vacant, in order that they might be applied to the colleges of the Barnabite fathers; and as a matter of fact these gentlemen have granted the benefices to four young relatives of theirs, to whom they have given the habit of their Order by the authority of the Abbot of Cluny, their general.

"Your Highness had rightly judged it expedient to transfer the revenue of that monastery to the upkeep of the Barnabite colleges and students, seeing that the monastery is practically in a state of ruin, beyond any hope of repair, and that monastic discipline is no more observed therein than it is in any of the other houses of that Order. There is no other course practicable but that Your Highness' excellent intention should be carried out, both by prohibiting the disposal of these prebends and by petitioning His Holiness to order the transference of the revenues from the Cluny Order to that of the Barnabite fathers, who are infinitely more useful for the service of God and the common weal. Your Highness was of this opinion when I left Turin: it only remains therefore to forward the petition to headquarters, a favour which I am now humbly seeking of your goodness."

* Hamon, vol. ii, p. 288. He quotes *Vie de la Mère de Ballon.*

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMLXIII, p. 306. ‡ *Journal.*

After a long struggle between the monks and the Barnabites, this matter was settled in favour of the latter by the Holy See in 1624. It is only fair to say that the General in question, Jacques de Veny d'Arbouze, was doing his best at this very time to wipe out the reproach contained in our Saint's letter, and eventually succeeded in effecting a reform.*

It is quite evident, from a letter written on September 26, that while Francis approved of the recent migration from the abbey of St Catherine, he was not disposed to urge any other nun of that house to join them unless this was clearly the will of God. To such a sister he says : " I have been wanting to write to you, dear daughter, ever since I received your letter, but it has scarcely been possible in the whirl of business affairs in which I have been engaged. At this moment, just as I am setting out for Belley, I want to tell you how greatly consoled I am to see that you are equally ready to go to Rumilly or to stay where you are. The very best disposition for a religious spirit is not to desire anything but the will of God, and those who are so happy as to keep themselves in this excellent frame of mind, do well anywhere and can remain anywhere with a perfectly good conscience. Consequently you must not be anxious in any way, but must continue to keep your peace of mind : the course of time will tell you if God desires that you should do aught else. In the meanwhile you will experience his divine goodness where you are, and at the same time will bless him for having given your sisters the inspiration and the courage to go and bless him in their present home. I will see them before my return, if I can, and will let you have news of them ; for I am very desirous to come and visit my cousin the Abbess, as soon as I return, and to see you all, glad as I am to please you in any way that is good." Probably as a consequence of this letter, the nun in question decided definitely to remain at St Catherine's.†

In another letter, written about the same time, we find one of those premonitions of approaching death such as we have already remarked in his thoughts at this period. Writing a letter of sympathy to Countess de Rossillon, on the occasion of her husband's death, he says : " Do not grieve too much, my daughter : we shall all be reunited soon. We are ever journeying towards the country that holds our dead, and in two or three moments we shall be there. Devote your thoughts only towards leading a good life and imitating all the excellence which we have seen in those we have loved."‡

As indicated in a former letter, Francis went to Belley at the end of September, in order to see Mgr. Camus before the latter went

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXLIV, p. 368 and notes iii and iv.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMXLV, p. 370.

‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMXLVII, p. 373.

to Paris. Little is known of this visit: it is certain, however, that he preached at the newly-founded house of the Visitation sisters on October 2. One passage in this sermon is remarkable for his insight into the slightest meaning of Scripture, and, when regarded in the light given to us by our knowledge of his own bodily infirmities at this time, gives us a picture, drawn unconsciously by him, of his own attitude towards his sufferings. "It would seem at first," he said, "that there is a redundance in those words: *Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth.* For, can we renounce what we do not possess? Yes, we can do so in a way, because we can give up things which we hope to have in the future, such as some heritage, honour, or similar thing. But the providence of God is admirable in this, having willed with salutary foreknowledge to use these words *what he possesseth* in order to teach us that principally and in the first place we should become bankrupt in things actually possessed before passing to a renunciation of what we might have in the future.

"Alas! how many mortals there are who mislead and delude themselves on this point! Ask a sick man why he longs for health and what he would do if he recovered. 'Ah,' he will answer, 'what would I do? I would thank God for having relieved me of the intense pain I was enduring, and I would willingly give up every sort of business to devote myself to his service.'—'Eh, my friend, what are you thinking of doing? You want to give God what you have not got. Before dedicating to him what you do not possess, offer him this infirmity and sickness of yours in full patience and resignation of your will with his. In this way you will be renouncing, in accordance with the divine will, that which you possess; I mean, this impatience, which is still yours, and which hinders you from bearing your pain and sickness out of love for him. . . .' Oh, how deep is our ignorance of heavenly teaching! When it is a matter of God's service we want to renounce the things of to-morrow in order to keep those of to-day."*

On October 3 Francis wrote to Father de Bérulle. After asking the latter to send some of the Oratorian fathers to Rumilly and promising them every assistance in their work, he goes on to say: "For the rest, I have received here at Belley, whence, God willing, I depart to-morrow, the beginning of your *Discourse on the State and Grandeurs of Jesus*, which good M. Crichant brought to me in your name. I will read it attentively and very affectionately, and in a short time will tell you candidly what I think of it, since you desire me to do so. In proof of which I will say at once I wish that in all things and in all places your gentleness and humility should firmly preserve their advantage over your adversaries, in consideration of

* E. N., Tom. X, Sermon LXVI, p. 395.

the fact that these latter are in the Church and wear the cloak, or at least the name of the cloak of Elias, as you say : which is the first shaft which I have found somewhat too keen, and which I should like to have eliminated, in order that, as far as possible, nothing whatever shall be seen in your *Discourses* but what evinces perfectly your gentle support and deep love of your neighbour. . . . You put me under too great an obligation, and show me an esteem altogether beyond my deserts, by giving me a share in your labours, which I admire immensely in their beginnings and which I shall ever affectionately admire as they make progress in my sight."*

On his return journey from Belley Francis stopped at the château of Sallagine, to officiate at the wedding of a nobleman, and on October arrived at Rumilly. Hearing of his arrival, the people came out in crowds to welcome him. As soon as they learned that he had come to their town to visit the Bernardine nuns, they escorted him to the new convent. Here he heard the sisters' confessions, made a visitation of the house, said Mass, and gave Holy Communion. Seeing that a number of the people had received admission into the chapel, he preached a sermon, encouraging the nuns to pursue their enterprise with zeal and fidelity, and reminding the people that it was to their great spiritual advantage to have such a religious house in their midst. Afterwards he gave a special exhortation to the nuns alone. In this he recommended them to speak of their former companions, the sisters of St Catherine, with naught but the greatest respect ; to place the fullest reliance upon the providence of God, who would most surely watch over them ; and to take the utmost care in their selection of subjects for the noviciate. On this point he advised them to accept gladly the poorer candidates, for fear lest under the pressure of need they should be tempted to enlist those whose vocations were doubtful : at any rate they were to use the greatest caution in admitting the richer postulants. He further counselled them to found a boarding school for girls, in order both to promote the cause of Christian education and to provide themselves with an excellent and safe means of subsistence. " My daughters," he said, in conclusion, " be brave, even to eating the stones of your house for want of other food, if you will let me put it thus. The founder of the Feuillants lived on wild herbs for five years, and had no other light, when darkness fell, but the lamp of the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary. . . . I only ask of you one year of courage : after that we will overcome everything. My poor children, there will be people who will not care what they say about you. The world will brand you as fools : but you must ever remember that it is the world which is really foolish. Put your trust in God alone." On this the sisters answered that under God they

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXLVIII, p. 375.

relied upon him also. "My children," he answered, "your father is already old: he cannot live much longer. Death comes to all." He afterwards presided over their election of a Superior and gave them constitutions which were approved by Pope Gregory XV.*

On the Bishop's return to Annecy he found that an evil, from which the town had been suffering for some time, had now reached a really desperate crisis. This was the poverty of the citizens, resulting from the quartering upon them of a large number of soldiers and from the levies exacted for the feeding of these unwelcome guests. So impossible had the situation become that many people had left the town. Even the religious Orders had been asked to lend money for the support of this burden: it is on record that the Barnabites had twice advanced three hundred ducatoons and the sisters of the Visitation two hundred and fifty. The Council now decided to send special envoys to the First President, to Prince Thomas of Savoy, and to Prince Henry of Nemours, protesting against the hardship entailed by the presence of the troops and asking for immediate relief. To the representations of the civic authorities, Francis added a petition addressed to Prince Thomas. "My Lord," he wrote, "I very humbly beg Your Most Serene Highness to allow me to have recourse to you for the relief of this town in its present urgent necessity, due to the quartering upon it of troops. For these latter threaten to make merciless efforts to obtain from individual citizens by hook or by crook what the community finds itself incapable of supplying by any legal means whatsoever, since even the funds of both monks and nuns have already been exhausted for this purpose. There is nothing left to the people but to take refuge in the kindness of Your Most Serene Highness, whose help it implores, by my intermediary, in all submission and reverence, confident that Your Highness' goodness is too great to allow a people, so loyal towards its Prince, to perish in misfortune and utter ruin. My Lord, driven by the rightful compassion which I cannot but feel for these poor folk, and moved by their continual prayers for my intercession, I make this supplication to Your Highness with every kind of respect."†

On Sunday, October 9, Francis, in his own private chapel, conferred the priesthood upon a deacon named Jacques Socquet: it was the last time that he administered the sacrament of Orders. On the same day he went into the town to visit the sick: in the house of one of his people he met Pernette Gard, a lawyer's wife, who was carrying in her arms a sick child. When Francis asked the mother what was ill with the child, the latter answered: "Alas, my Lord, for three months now she has been suffering from a slow fever."

* Hamon quotes dep. of Myucet.

† E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMXLIX, p. 378 and note.

The Bishop touched the girl's cheek, blessed her, and said : " May God cure you, my child." Scarcely had he gone on his way when the little one exclaimed : " Mother, I am cured : I felt it when the Bishop touched me." And, as a matter of fact, from that moment her health was completely restored.*

* C. A. de S., l. x^me^, p. 236 of vol. ii, and dep. of F. Favre.

CHAPTER XIV*
(1622)

Francis goes to Avignon—Then to Lyons—Last interview with St Jane Frances de Chantal—He is taken ill—His death

IN the autumn of 1622 Louis XIII and Charles Emmanuel of Savoy agreed to meet at Avignon for the discussion of certain political matters which interested them both. On his side the Duke probably hoped to obtain the support of France in any attempt which he might make to regain possession of Geneva. It is known that he was still plotting for this purpose. Mugnier hints that Francis de Sales knew something of this, and gives it as an explanation of the Saint's strong determination to attend the conference between the two rulers, in spite of the parlous condition of his health.† For Francis had, as a matter of fact, received orders from the Duke to be present at Avignon. Hamon ascribes the motive of these orders to Princess Christine, who was to accompany the Duke and who wished to have her Grand Almoner with her on this occasion. The Bishop's own version of his motives we shall see shortly.

On hearing the news of the proposed journey, all the Saint's friends were struck with dismay. They rightly judged that the necessary exertions and privations of travelling, coupled with the inclemency of the winter season, would prove too much for his weakened strength. Singly and united, they besought him to excuse himself to the Duke on the grounds of his ill-health, and volunteered to seek out Charles Emmanuel themselves in order to make their Prince completely aware of the difficulties and dangers which Francis would be forced to undergo, if he obeyed the orders given. The Bishop, however, refused to accede to their prayers. He considered that for him at this juncture the commands of his Prince were an indication of God's will. Moreover, for the benefit of that part of his diocese which lay in France, it was of the utmost importance that he should have a personal interview with Louis XIII, and this proposed meeting was likely to give him the desired opportunity. "We must go whither God calls us," he said. "We will keep on as long as we can, and we will stop when sickness prevents us from going any further." Nevertheless he had a strong presentiment that he would never return. Accordingly he took steps to put all his affairs

* Hamon, l. vi, chap. 11.

† *Histoire du Président Favre*, p. 493.

in order, and the first of these was the making of his will, conjointly with the Bishop of Chalcedon, before several of his most intimate relatives and friends. Amongst these were Louis de Sales, Georges Rolland, and Claude de Quoëx, whose names have appeared so often in these pages. M. Hamon gives the following passages from the will:

"We, Francis de Sales, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop and Prince of Geneva, and Jean François de Sales, Bishop of Chalcedon and Coadjutor in the bishopric of the said Geneva, wishing to make known to all whom it may concern our last will . . . beg, firstly, that Almighty God will receive our souls in mercy and bestow upon them the heritage which our Redeemer acquired for us with his blood; secondly, we invoke the glorious Virgin Mary and all the saints to implore God's mercy for us both in life and in death; thirdly, if it please the divine Providence that the one, holy, and true religion, Catholic and Roman, be re-established in the city of Geneva at the time of our death, we order that in this case our bodies be buried in our cathedral church; but if it be not so re-established, we order that they be laid to rest in the middle of the nave in the church of the Visitation at Annecy, which church we consecrated, unless we die outside our diocese, in which case we leave the choice of our burial-place to those who at the time may form our suite; fourthly, approving with all our heart the sacred ceremonies of the Church, we order that at our funeral thirteen candles shall be lighted above our coffin, without other escutcheon than that of the name of Jesus, in order to testify that with all our heart we embrace the faith preached by the Apostles; but beyond this, detesting the vanities and extravagances which the human spirit has introduced into such ceremonies, we expressly prohibit the use of any other kind of lights at our funeral, begging our relatives and friends, and commanding our heirs, to add nothing further, but to exercise their love towards us in prayers and almsgiving, and especially in the celebration of the most adorable sacrifice of the Mass.

"We bequeath to Janus de Sales, Knight of the Holy Order of Malta, our brother, the sum of 200 florins as an annual and perpetual pension during his lifetime; to Dame Gasparde de Sales, wife of Noble Melchior de Cornillon, Seigneur of Meyrens, the sum of 50 crowns or two of our rings, according as she shall choose; to Noble Sebastien, Amé, Louis, Jean Antoine, and Bernard, children of the late M. Gallois de Sales, Seigneur of Boisy and Villaroget, our nephews, the sum of two thousand golden sun-crowns, with all that we might claim of the property which they now possess; in consideration of which the said legatees will abstain from all other

claims to our inheritances, or to the properties of La Thuille, Sales, and Thorens, under any pretext whatsoever. . . .

" Each of us institutes the other as general heir, and the survivor of the two of us institutes as general heir M. Louis de Sales, Seigneur and Baron of Sales, Thorens, and La Thuille, Councillor and Knight of the Council of Genevois, our brother, and after him, or in default of him, the eldest of his male children. . . . And if it happen that the male line of our said brother fail, we substitute the eldest of the male children of the late Seigneur of Boisy, our brother : with this exception, that our moveable property shall remain at the free disposal of that one of us who survives the other.

" We will that this be our last testament : to which end we revoke all others which we may have made and all their contents. . . .

" Signed at Annecy, the 6th day of the month of November, in the year 1622. Francis, Bishop of Geneva. Jean François, Bishop of Chalcedon."

On the next day Francis devoted the morning to the care of his soul, spending it in prayer, examination of conscience, and confession : during the afternoon he was engaged in a long interview with his brother, the Bishop of Chalcedon, in which he discussed fully the affairs of the diocese and handed over to the Coadjutor all documents of importance. When this was done, he exclaimed joyfully : " Truly, it seems to me that, by God's grace, I have almost lost my footing on this earth, and the time of my departure is near." This was the burden of all his utterances during these last hours at Annecy. Whilst he was saying good-bye to his relatives, he spoke as one who was to see them no more. In answer to the fears expressed by one of them, he said : " What does it matter if I die outside my own country, provided that I die well ? " When his canons came to bid him farewell, he was particularly gentle in his manner, addressed them as his brothers, and embraced each one affectionately. To Pierre Critain, the parish priest of Thônes, he said : " I am going to our Lord : we shall never see each other again in this world."—" O my Lord," replied the curé, " when I consider your appearance and the state of your health, I find every hope of seeing you once more." To which the Bishop answered in a low voice : " Ah, Monsieur, you do not know all." Lastly, to Father Anselme Marchand, an intimate friend, he said : " This journey will cost me my life, and we shall never meet again except in heaven : but one must be obedient, like our Master, even unto the death of the cross."

It was probably on November 8 that Francis went for his last visit to the convent of the Visitation. After saying Mass for the sisters in their chapel, he handed over to them a magnificent chasuble, which had been given to him by one of the princesses of Savoy.

" For," he said, " when friends take leave of each other, they usually exchange gifts." Then, for a short time, he spoke to them, telling them that he felt the near approach of death, urging them to remember his teaching and especially recommending to them the virtues of humility, simplicity, and obedience. " My dear daughters," he said, " ask for nothing and refuse nothing : be ever ready for what God and holy obedience demand of you. Let your one desire be to love God : your only ambition to possess him. Farewell, my dear children, unto eternity."—" My Lord," cried out the sisters, " we pray God bring you back to us again."—" And if God does not will to bring me back," he answered, " are we to bless him any the less ? His good pleasure is ever equally adorable." As he was leaving the convent, he had one last meeting, which must have brought back many memories to his mind, for there kneeling before him and begging his blessing was Anne Jacqueline Coste, the lay sister whom he had found in service many years back, leading a saintly life in the very home of heresy itself. When he saw her tears, he said : " My daughter, I have gone on many another journey before this, and I have never seen you cry at my going. Why are you so grieved today ? "—" Ah," she replied, " it is because my heart tells me that this will be the last journey, and that we shall never see each other again."—" And I," answered Francis gravely, " my heart tells me that, if I do not return, we shall see each other again sooner than you think." Thus once more he uttered a prophecy that was fulfilled by the event.

The Saint quitted Annecy that same day, leaving his household and his friends in foreboding and grief. At the moment of parting, the Bishop of Chalcedon, unable to hide his sorrow, fell down on his knees before the Saint, asking the latter's blessing ; and it was on his knees that he received his brother's last embrace. As Francis left the town, many of the chief clergy and citizens joined him, and accompanied him as far as Seyssel, when they said good-bye to him with every mark of love and sorrow.

It is difficult to fix the dates of the Saint's last journey. According to several of his biographers he left Annecy on the 9th : on the next day he embarked at Seyssel to go by boat to Belley, and on the 11th said Mass there at the Visitation convent before continuing his journey to Lyons. In the new edition of the *Œuvres Complètes*, however, there is published a letter from Francis to Antoine Favre, dated " viii Novembre, 1622, a Sessel." This completely upsets the former chronology. The editors of the *Œuvres* go on to say that the Bishop arrived at Lyons on the evening of the 9th or the morning of the 10th.

On leaving Seyssel Francis was accompanied by Canon Rolland, M. Pernet d'Araches, a canon of Le Roche, and his two servants,

François Favre and Germain Pilliod. It was bitterly cold and an icy wind was blowing over the water, so that the whole party were almost frozen. The Bishop bore it all with his usual patience, and, when somebody attempted to sympathize with him, remarked : " Do you not know that here below we are *serving under the elements of the world ?* "

At Belley he visited the new foundation of the Visitation, where a remarkable incident took place. One of the nuns, a very saintly soul, named Sister Simplicienne, burst into tears on seeing him, and, when he asked her the cause of her grief, exclaimed : " Ah, my Lord, it is because you will die this year." Surprised, in spite of himself, the Bishop answered : " What is that you said, my child ?—that I shall die this year ? "—" Yes, my Lord, but I beg you to pray to our Lord and his Holy Mother that it may not happen."—" My child," said the Saint, " do not ask me that : for I will not do it." —" Well," replied the sister, " I will do it, and I will pray hard to our Lord and the Blessed Virgin that your death may be put off for several years and that he will leave you here for the consolation of your poor daughters, for the strengthening of our Institute, and for the good of the whole Church."—" Do nothing of the kind, my dear child," begged Francis. " Alas, would you not be glad that I should go to my rest ? Look you, I am so tired and so heavy that I can scarcely carry myself. Moreover, what need have you of my presence ? You have your Constitutions, in which all things have been so admirably settled, and I am leaving you our Mother de Chantal, who is sufficient for all your needs. Finally we should never place our hope in mortal man, but in the living God alone. . . ."*

After hearing the confessions of the sisters, the Bishop said Mass and gave them Holy Communion. During the course of this Mass he was seen to be surrounded by a supernatural light and appeared as one in a state of ecstasy. When his thanksgiving was ended, he made an inspection of the convent, and, seeing how small were their quarters, congratulated them upon this fact, remarking that it filled him with joy. Having met a Mme. des Roys, who was accompanied by a little girl of five or six years of age, he caressed the child for a moment, called her by her name, though this had not been told him, and made the sign of the cross on her forehead. " I mark you, Marie," he said, " as a future daughter of the Visitation." Many years afterwards Mlle. des Roys fulfilled his words. Although his time was short at Belley, he devoted more than three hours to an interview with a deaf lady who had come from Saint Rambert in order to consult him.

* Hamon quotes *Fondation inédite du 13me monastère de la Visitation en la ville de Belley*, p. 174, and *Vie des premières mères de la Visitation*, Tom. II, p. 36.

Continuing his journey, the Saint arrived at Lyons, to find Mme. de Chantal awaiting him. They had not seen each other for nearly four years, and there was much to be discussed between them: nevertheless, pressed by the need of continuing his journey, and possibly as a test of her obedience and self-denial, he detained her for a short time only, and sent her to visit the houses of Montferrand and Saint Etienne. After having said Mass at the Visitation of Bellecœur, and talked for a short time with the Mother Superior, he was obliged to hasten to the boat, which was soon due for departure. As he was about to embark, the boatman stopped him, and treating him as a foreigner, asked him with no little rudeness to show his passport. The Bishop's companions were indignant with the man, and talked of chastising him for his insolence, but Francis himself remained calm. "Leave him alone," he said, "he knows his work as a boatman and is doing it; we on the other hand do not seem to know what is required of a traveller." He immediately sent Canon Rolland to obtain a passport from the Governor of the city. During this time he waited patiently on the shore for an hour and a half, without a word of complaint against the boatman or against his own people, whose business it ought to have been to obtain the passport beforehand. When someone grumbled at the delaying of their journey, he answered: "It is true that I am pressed for time, but God knows about it, and we must only desire whatever his providence permits." When at length the document was obtained, Francis went quietly on board and took his place by the boatman's side, saying to one of his companions: "I want to make friends with this good fellow and talk to him a little about our Lord."

On his way to Valence, it would seem, he passed a few hours at Vienne, for we have a letter of his written from that town to M. de Peyzieu, but he was unable to spare the time even for a visit to its Archbishop. Arrived at Valence, he made his way at once to the Visitation convent, which had been founded by Mme. de la Granelle. This lady lived at the convent as a boarder, and it was her intense desire to become one of its sisters. At this time she was eighty-four years old, and rather naturally the sisters hesitated to receive her as a religious on account of her age. Francis, however, on hearing of her wishes, declared that there was no age unfit for consecration to the service of God, and he promised Mme. de Granelle that he himself would give her the veil on his return journey.

Francis was very anxious to visit Sister Mary of Valence, a religious whose renown for sanctity was well established in the district, and as he did not know where she lived, he asked that one of the outsisters should show him the way. This good sister walked so quickly that the Saint was obliged to ask her to slacken her pace: she at once obeyed, but little by little unconsciously returned to her former

rate of progress, and the poor Bishop found himself obliged to hasten his steps as best he could. "Those who are being led must follow their leader," was his only comment, and somehow we can imagine the half-rueful smile and the gentle shake of his head with which he surrendered to the inevitable. When he reached his destination, he placed his hand upon the out-sister's head as she knelt for his blessing, and prophesied that one day she should enter the convent as a fully enclosed nun. He had such a long conversation with Sister Mary that the evening was far advanced when he was taking leave, and his companions, who had grown weary of the interview, had become very discontented. One of them went so far as to say: "Really, my Lord, it is a shame to make us trot about the streets at this hour. So long as you can find some patterer of paternosters, you do not care about anything else." At this sally the Bishop smiled, and only answered: "You must remember, Sir, that it does a sinner like myself the greatest good to have a heart-to-heart talk with such a lover of Jesus Christ as Sister Mary. She will say a *Hail Mary* for you, and after you have had a good sleep to-night you will have forgotten all about your trouble by to-morrow."*

At Bourg-Saint-Andeol the Bishop had to submit to a ceremonial reception, much to his affliction. The officials of the town and a great concourse of people came down to the landing stage to meet him, and then escorted him to the parish church, where, in spite of his humble protests, a *Te Deum* was chanted as a thanksgiving to God for the honour and happiness of having him amongst them. "The next day," says Charles Auguste, "the same officials conducted him back to the boat, after overwhelming him with honours and presents."†

On his arrival at Avignon Francis found the city so full that at first it seemed impossible to obtain lodgings. Eventually a poor man was found who was commissioned to guide him and another prelate to a hostelry in the rue de la Croix d'or. To add to their troubles, the rain was coming down in torrents. While the prelate was complaining bitterly at having to go from inn to inn along the muddy streets and under a continual downpour, Francis endured these inconveniences with his usual calm, and occupied his time by talking with the guide, catechizing him, we are told, about his religion. When they arrived at the hostelry, the Saint thanked the man for his services with the greatest affability and promised to remember him next day during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.‡

As soon as it was known that Francis was in Avignon, all classes

* *Année*, Nov. 14. Hamon also quotes dep. of M. Pernat, who was with the Saint.

† C. A. de S., l. x^me^, p. 239 of vol. ii.

‡ Hamon quotes *Vie de la Mère de Ballon*, l. iii, chap. 3.

of society hastened to pay him every mark of respect. The Vice-Legate set the example, and by the honour and friendship which he showed our Saint, drew everybody's attention to him. Francis, on his part, was overwhelmed in his humility by these demonstrations, and, in order to avoid them, covered up the signs of his episcopal rank and forbade his people to mention his name aloud. It was all in vain, however. As soon as he appeared in the streets, the people came running forward to do him reverence, kiss the hem of his cloak, and ask for his blessing. On every side he heard complimentary remarks. " Ah, here is the saintly Bishop of Geneva . . . the Apostle of Chablais . . . the author of those wonderful books, the *Devout Life* and the *Love of God* . . . the Founder of the Visitation. . . ." On one occasion, in order to escape the flattering attentions of these good people, he stepped aside into a bookshop as if to examine the books within. " Alas," he said, " what Solomon said is true indeed. *Vanity of vanities. The number of fools is infinite.* If I followed my impulse, I would do something ridiculous for the very purpose of undeceiving these people. But one must live according to the dictates of Christian sincerity, and play neither the fool nor the wise man, act neither to be praised nor despised, but go on simply and faithfully in the service of God, our divine Master." At other times he would say : " Ah, my God, not to us, but to thy name, be given every glory."

On the day after Francis' arrival Louis XIII, returning from his victory over the Huguenots at Montpellier, made his triumphal entry into Avignon, accompanied by the Queen-Mother, Marie de Médicis, and his consort, Queen Anne of Austria. People lined the streets and crowded the windows in order to see this magnificent spectacle, to which both Court and town contributed every possible pomp and splendour. During all this excitement Francis remained quietly at work, never once going to the window to see the procession, and when his friends urged him to look just for a moment at such a wonderful sight, he answered quietly : " I leave my place to you who are still of this world. As for me, I belong to it no longer. I shall soon be going to my Father who is in heaven. I must needs keep on working for his interests, that I may render a good account of my stewardship." So he went to his room and shut himself within, in order to draw up a memorandum about the affairs of the college of St Nicolas of Savoy, an institution founded in Avignon by a former Bishop of Geneva, in which that diocese had a certain number of burses.*

Francis maintained this attitude throughout the whole of his stay in Avignon. He went to the public festivities as little as possible, never paid court to influential people except in the interests of his

* *Année*, Nov. 17.

calling, and only received such visitors as desired to speak to him about religious affairs and the service of God. In such work as this he doubtless found his time fully occupied, the more so because both the Duke of Savoy and his son, the Cardinal, had by now arrived in the city, and there were many serious matters to be discussed between them.

On November 19 he passed the greater part of the day with the Jesuits. After Mass he remained so long in prayer that the Rector at last felt obliged to interrupt him, reminding him that they had only that day to enjoy his company, and that the fathers earnestly desired to see him and converse with him. "Look you, Father," said the Bishop, as he obeyed the Rector's wishes, "I find in prayer my greatest happiness and profit; for in this union of my heart with God I always learn something useful that I can apply to my greater good." When dinner was over he went with the fathers to their common-room, and remained so long in conversation with them that there was no time to visit the rest of the institution. When the Rector was expressing his regret for this fact, Francis answered: "I would rather spend a long time in spiritual intercourse with one good soul than see all the greatest curiosities in the world." Then he added, with a deep sigh: "Good-bye, my dear Father, we are journeying on towards heaven, and before long the earth will have passed from beneath us."*

During his stay in Avignon Francis said Mass in various convents and churches, amongst others the cathedral of Notre Dame des Doms, the Minims, and the Bernardines. One morning he went to the church of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, or Doctrinaires, founded not so many years before by the Venerable César de Bus. The body of this saintly man, which since his death in 1607 had remained incorrupt, was enshrined in a glass-covered coffin, placed in one of the chapels. When the Bishop expressed his desire to say Mass in this chapel, the sacristan, thinking that he wished to say a Requiem Mass for the soul of the Founder, laid out black vestments. But Francis asked for white, adding: "I intend to say the Mass for a Confessor. The venerable César de Bus is a saint, and I am going to thank our Lord for the graces bestowed upon him."

The Bishop also offered the Holy Sacrifice at the chapel of St Praxedes on November 22, where he wished to attend the Office of St Cecilia, sung by the nuns. He always had a great devotion to this martyr, as the patroness of Church music, and, when he was at Annecy, never failed to be present in his cathedral at all the offices of her feast day. On the present occasion, when Mass was ended, he spoke for a moment to the Superior at the choir-grill and gave the sisters a short address on St Cecilia. Later on, one of the nuns came for-

* *Ibid.*, Nov. 19.

ward and said to him : " My Lord, you are the Founder of a religious order : you must grant us the favour of having one of your convents in this town."—" Mother," answered Francis, " our Institute is as yet small and weak, but the faithful observation of its constitutions is capable of producing great virtue. God will grant your prayer, and before long we shall have two of our little hives in this country."*

Francis was very anxious to visit the grotto of Sainte Baume, in which, according to the western tradition, St Mary Magdalen spent the last years of her life. Cardinal Maurice, however, was unwilling to allow him the time necessary for this purpose, alleging that the plans of the two courts were very uncertain and that at any moment it might be necessary for the whole company to leave Avignon. " Monsieur de Genève," he said, " your heart is always a Sainte Baume, in which you lead a hermit's life." Prince Maurice knew that this compliment, graceful as it was, was no mere flattery : and, as a matter of fact, in uttering it he was only voicing what Francis himself had written in days gone by to Mme. de Chantal : " My room is full of people who claim my attention, yet my heart is ever alone." As to the present disappointment, he accepted it with calmness, and contented himself with going to Tarascon, there to venerate the relics of St Martha.

He spent part of the day on November 24 in visiting churches in and around Avignon. Amongst these was the church of the Celestines, where reposed the relics of Blessed Peter of Luxembourg. Having been asked to speak to those who were present on this occasion, he preached an eloquent panegyric in honour of the saintly prelate, without any preparation but the time he had spent in prayer at Blessed Peter's tomb. He afterwards returned to the shrine for a further period of meditation, and, when he was interrupted by his attendants on account of the passage of time, said : " Let me stay a little while longer in the company of this illustrious master. I have never read anything which has so filled me with confusion at the thought of my ecclesiastical vocation as the life of this young cardinal."†

In the meanwhile the Court negotiations and festivities had come to an end. There had been a number of secret conferences, with the result of which the Duke of Savoy seemed well pleased on the whole. At any rate he made a present to Louis XIII of four magnificent horses, a sword, and a shield, jewelled with diamonds and other precious stones. The two Courts left Avignon on November 25 for Lyons, whither our Saint followed them.‡ During the first part of his journey he came into contact with two Calvinist gentlemen, with whom he had many conversations and who were

* *Année*, Nov. 22. † *Année*, Nov. 24.

‡ Hamon, Pérennès and *Journal*.

completely captivated by the charm of his manner and the force of his learning. On reaching Pont-Saint-Esprit, the two gentlemen communicated their impressions of Francis to their companions, and expressed the opinion that, if all the bishops were like him, the majority of Calvinists, if not all, would soon become Catholics, and the religion of Luther and Calvin would disappear.

When the Bishop's party arrived at a town, said to be Barbières, where they were to pass the night, it was found that every bed in the hostelry was engaged. Thereupon his people desired to make known his name and rank, in the hope that an extra effort would be made to find accommodation for him. Francis, however, would not allow this. "Will you never understand," he said, "that I am a man of peace? Have I not caused enough trouble in my life, without giving any more at present?" And so he retired to a granary, lay down fully dressed on some straw, and sought sleep, as best he could, in defiance of the cold and discomfort. The next morning two Jesuit fathers, who had a room at the inn and who had been told of the manner in which he had spent the night, came to him in distress, and assured him, almost reproachfully, that they would have been only too willing to have given him their room. Francis recognized the genuineness of their regret, thanked them warmly, and reassured them. "I did not wish it," he said to them: "and truly, thanks to this accident, I passed a very good night. I have never slept better."*

On his arrival at Valence, on November 27, the people crowded around him in such numbers that he had the greatest difficulty in making his way to the Hôtel du Petit Paris, where he was to pass the night. An excellent room had at first been assigned to him; but later in the day a foreign lady arrived at the inn, and, having seen the Bishop's room, expressed her wishes that it should be reserved for her use. On hearing of this, he at once consented that she should have her way, and accepted in exchange a far less comfortable apartment. "Put our things in here," he said, "it will suit us to perfection." The next difficulty was that in this other room there was only one bed, and it had been arranged that Francis and Canon Rolland should share a bedroom. Francis wanted the Canon to take the bed, and the latter naturally would not hear of it. "Well, at any rate," said the Bishop, "we will divide it up between us." So he put the top mattress and all the bedding on the floor for his friend, and he himself lay down, in his clothes, on the palliasse of the bed.

The next morning, November 28, Francis said Mass in the Visitation chapel and gave the habit to Mme. de la Granelle, in fulfilment of his promise to that venerable lady. He then addressed the sisters

* *Année*, Nov. 26.

on the text *Senes cum junioribus*, speaking in the most wonderful manner of the eternity of God.

He left Valence that afternoon or evening. At the moment of his departure he sent for the landlady, in order that he might pay his reckoning. He was told that she was engaged for the moment and could not come. "Do not disturb her," he answered, "we will wait for her." His companions, however, were not so patient, and began to grumble at being kept waiting so long at the hostelry door. "At all costs, let us be civil," said Francis. "We can pay her for her goods with money, but for her good will and attention we owe her at least a few words of courtesy." At length, when the landlady arrived, full of apologies for the delay, the Bishop, after settling his account, spoke kindly to her for a few moments and then gave her his blessing. As Francis left the town he again found himself surrounded by crowds of people who seemed unwilling to let him go, and who accompanied him for some distance on his way to Lyons.*

He reached that city on November 29. Immediately on his arrival a number of distinguished people hastened to offer him hospitality. Amongst them was M. Jacques Olier, Intendant of the province, who was already well known to the Saint. This gentleman offered to give up to Francis half his house, which, as it was very large in itself and lay not far from the Visitation convent, offered the double convenience of being suitable for the reception of visitors and of being close to those whom the Bishop would most often wish to call upon. The Jesuit fathers, on their part, also came forward and begged him to accept their house of St Joseph. Francis, however, had other intentions. Thanking his friends for their invitations, he replied that, foreseeing the difficulty of finding rooms during the visit of the two Courts to their city, he had fixed upon a lodging which he knew for certain would be at his disposal. Then, having relieved the anxieties of his friends on this head, he made his way to the Visitation, and asked his daughters to let him stay in their gardener's cottage, where there was a little room generally reserved for the use of their confessor on the days when he came to the convent to exercise his special office. The sisters, however, expostulated with him on hearing this proposal. The cottage was exposed to all the winds of heaven, the room was draughty and cold, the chimney smoked so badly that they could scarcely light a fire in the grate, and for the Bishop to stay there in his present state of health was to incur the gravest of risks. But they protested in vain. He answered that he was never so comfortable as when he was almost without comfort; that, living thus close to the convent, it would be easier

* *Année*, Nov. 28 and 29. *Journal*, Nov. 28. Hamon also quotes *Histoire de la Fondation de Valence*.

for him to be at their disposal; that, being separated from the distraction of the court, he would be able to lead a more recollected life and would be more accessible to all those who wished to see him; and finally that he would feel relieved at the thought that he was thus putting no one to any inconvenience on his behalf. "Alas," he said, "I have already found enough fuss and commotion going on in this town without my becoming the cause of any more." And so he settled down happily in this little room. When his friends discovered where he was and lovingly reproached him for taking up such poor quarters, when they were so anxious to offer him the best of homes, his answer was much the same as that which he had made to the nuns. "I am very well placed in this house," he said, "in order to receive any needy souls whom Providence may send to me. It is equally good for me on the score of restfulness, for the smallness of my lodging exempts me from the burden of entertaining on a large scale."

It was in the same spirit that he refused the use of a carriage, which his friends had offered to him. In spite of the fact that the swollen condition of his legs gave him the greatest difficulty and pain, he persisted in his usual practice of walking to the various labours to which his zeal called him. Thus, on the second Sunday of Advent he was engaged to preach at the church attached to the Jesuit college, and an ecclesiastic of his acquaintance begged him to go thither by coach. "I should look well," he said, "going off in a carriage to announce the penitential preaching of St John and the poverty of Christ's gospel!"*

That same evening on returning home he was visited by a nobleman, who was reduced to the greatest poverty, not through any unavoidable misfortune, but through sheer extravagance and love of display. He introduced himself as a friend of Bernard de Sales, whom he had known in Piedmont and whom he now praised in the most flattering terms. Having thus prepared the way, he went on to the real object of his visit, which was the begging of an alms. It is not likely that Francis was deceived by this procedure, but his charity was, as ever, equal to the occasion, and he complied with the gentleman's request. The latter overwhelmed his benefactor with thanks, protesting that he would never cease praying Almighty God to repay the Bishop's generosity a hundredfold. "You must use all haste then, Sir," answered Francis, "in obtaining this great benefit for me by your prayers: for soon both you and I will be beyond all need of anything on this earth." It was about this time also that he continued his kindness to M. Philippe Jacob, the former Calvinist, whom he had interviewed in Paris and had afterwards helped most generously at Annecy. This gentleman was now bedridden by sickness: Francis hastened to visit him, and, through the

* C. A. de S., l. x^me^, p. 242 of vol. ii.

intermediary of some of the Court people, obtained for him considerable financial assistance.*

We have already seen in these pages how distasteful to the Saint was his enforced attendance on the Court and how he attended its functions as seldom as possible. During his last days this tendency was more marked than ever. He was, as his biographer says, "the untiring apostle, the man of heaven, for whom God and the souls of men were everything, and for whom the world and its vanities were naught. While all the inhabitants of the city were following in the wake of kings and queens, princes and princesses, while the festivities organized in their honour were occupying the attention of all classes and filling the town with noise and tumult, he was occupied, at the convent of the Visitation, in speaking to his daughters of God and of the things of eternity. He had done everything he could for his beloved Order; already thirteen convents had been founded in various parts of Savoy and France, at Annecy, Lyons, Moulins, Grenoble, Bourges, Paris, Montferrand, Orleans, Nevers, Valence, Dijon, Belley, and Saint Etienne-en-Forez; it only remained for him now to bid his daughters farewell, and to give them his final counsels. Much of the material of these last instructions was preserved by the nuns and has been published in his *Entretiens:* naturally, the greater part of it refers to the spiritual life of the Visitation, and is not suitable for quotation in these pages, but on many pages there stand out sayings that are almost epigrammatic and which are closely packed with his spirituality, his power of observation, and his wit. We venture to give a few of these, chosen at haphazard, at the risk of their losing some of their brilliance from being torn from their setting. Speaking of the practice of the presence of God, he says: "We cannot continually have our presence of God; that belongs only to the angels. It is sufficient if we keep ourselves therein as much as is possible for us, and often lift up our minds to God. The mind cannot remain for ever in a state of tension. . . . When we do something for God, that is living in his presence."

"There are few who discover the vein of true poverty, which consists in desiring nothing, but being content with the little which God wills us to have."

"Recreation is necessary, for we cannot keep our minds for ever unrelaxed: there would be a danger of our becoming gloomy and sad."

"We should not be upset if sometimes we go to sleep during our prayers, provided we do what we can to keep awake. . . . Our Lord is sometimes pleased to see us struggling against sleep during the whole of our prayer, without delivering us from our weakness. We must endure it patiently and love its humiliation."

Of this and other temptations he recalls an ancient maxim, but

* *Ibid.*, p. 242.

spiritualizes it : " We must never say that we cannot do a certain thing, for what we really will, that we can do. It would be tantamount to saying that our Lord had put an impossibility before us, which is not true. We can do all things in his grace, which never fails us."

" Self-accusation is of little use to us, when we cannot endure to be reproved by others."

" The ills of the body do not hinder devotion : on the contrary, they even help us, if we take them from the hands of God."

" Humiliation is not so bad as we are inclined to imagine. It will not be so painful as we think. Do not be afraid of it."

" You will find few young women who are not self-opinionated : when you find one who is not, hold her very dear."

" A person who suffers martyrdom with one ounce of love, merits much ; for one cannot give more than one's life : yet another person who suffers no more than a fillip, but does so with two ounces of love, will have more merit, because it is charity and love which give all things their value."

Sometimes, in the course of these discourses, his sense of humour would flash out. The nuns had told him that with regard to one superioress, whom they venerated dearly, certain sisters had found it difficult not to call her " Mother " when her term of office ended. His retort came swiftly. " If you called her ' Grandmother,' I don't know that I would have much to say. Nevertheless, I see that these sisters neither honour nor obey their rules and constitutions." Speaking of his fear lest, through a spirit of prudence, they should reject candidates of weak health, he said : " If some day, when I am gone, it should happen that you make difficulties about receiving delicate people into your houses, I would come back and haunt you, and would make so much noise in your dormitories that you would soon understand how much you were acting against my intentions."

Sometimes in these last discourses we find descriptions of himself and of his own spiritual aspirations. " Our mother wants me to write on the maxims of the Son of God : I honour them, I revere them, I respect them with all my heart, but I do not practise them. The Son of God said : *Do not dispute, do not enter into lawsuits with your neighbour ;* but if I do not do it, everybody is against me. The Son of God said : *If a man take away thy coat, let go thy cloak unto him also ;* if I try to do it, I am told I am very wrong, that I shall leave myself nothing, that I am already poor enough. The Son of God said : *If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other ;* but the world does not want that and will not tolerate the slightest insult. The Son of God said : *Be meek ;* and people want me to get angry, and if I do not do so, account it a folly."

Another time he said : " It is true that I have a great love for all, but especially for simple souls. As to the honour which, according to you, I pay to everyone, politeness alone teaches us to do that, and besides I am naturally inclined that way. I have never been able to imitate certain people, to whom it seems necessary, when once they have been raised to some dignity, to insist that they be treated with great honour by everyone ; and in their letters refuse to subscribe themselves as *Your humble servant* except to people of the highest rank. As to myself, I sign myself thus to everybody, unless I am writing to Pierre and François, my footmen, who would think that I was making fun of them were I to put ' Your very humble servant ' in their letters. But I do not make any great distinction of persons." Speaking of his own spirit of obligingness, to which his attention had been called, he said : " I find no great difficulty in it, and it never causes me trouble . . . by nature my own personal desires are not strong, and, besides, ought we not always to be obliging towards our neighbour ? I am unable to go contrary to the wishes of others, and when I see that anyone desires a certain thing, I give way."* In considering such expressions of our Saint, it must always be borne in mind that he was alluding to things that were innocent and lawful in themselves, but about which ordinary people may have strong likes or dislikes. In important matters of right and wrong, where some great principle was concerned, Francis de Sales was the firmest of men, and neither the commands of the great nor the wishes of his dearest friends had power to move him.

One last touch showed how well he understood the needs of a spiritual soul and of a community living in real charity. " Father," said one of his daughters, " write for us on this paper what you most desire of us." He took the pen and slowly, with every appearance of deep concentration, wrote one word : " Humility."

For all his zeal in instructing his daughters, he did not neglect his social duties, especially where he knew that these were for the good of religion or for the benefit of souls. Thus on the evening of December 10 we find him visiting the Princesse de Soissons. It was on this occasion that a lady of the Court said to him : " Really, my Lord, if you were dressed in red, you would be taken for St Charles Borromeo." Francis turned away this outspoken praise, which was too sincere to be flattery, by gently remarking : " Why, madame, being dressed in red is no help towards sanctity. We must try and resemble the saints, not in their clothes, but in their actions."† There is no doubt that by this time his reputation for learning and holiness was widespread and firmly established. Some Germans who

* E. N., Tom. VI, *Les Vrais Entretiens Spirituels*, Appendices E and F.

† *Année*, Dec. 10.

were in Lyons at this time reported that in their country his name was frequently coupled with such doctors of the Church as St Jerome, St Augustine, and St Ambrose. It is not reported that this was said to his face, but on several occasions he was obliged to listen to compliments which must have been intensely distasteful to his genuine humility. Yet he always answered them simply and unaffectedly. Thus a certain doctor of the Sorbonne, after a long discussion with the Bishop on theological matters, thanked him with these words: "You are looked upon by everybody as a saint: and honestly, not without reason. I know it now by my own experience." —"Oh, Sir," replied Francis, "may God in his goodness preserve you from such sanctity! I assure you that you are just as much mistaken as the others. But I will tell you one thing. I have a good and firm resolution to serve God well in the future, and in order that I may some day be really holy, you can give me the help of your prayers." At another time, when the conversation turned upon St Francis Xavier, a worthy ecclesiastic remarked: "Well now, praise be to God, we already have three Francises as canonized saints—St Francis of Assisi, St Francis of Paula, and St Francis Xavier; it only remains to have St Francis of Sales!" This time our Bishop passed it off with a smile and a low-voiced remark. "Would to God that I were a saint!"*

Amongst the houses which St Francis frequented during his last days was that of M. Jacques Olier. Both M. Olier and his wife were at this time much exercised in mind about the vocation of one of their children, Jean Jacques. The child had been destined for the ecclesiastical state, but his rather impetuous disposition and his proclivity for escapades, in which by the way he showed a daring not altogether unadmirable, gave his parents much reason to doubt whether he would ever become a suitable subject for the priesthood. The boy had been punished and whipped often, and his mother was at times over-severe with him: but no amount of punishment and reprimand seemed to have any influence over him. Mme. Olier consulted Francis de Sales in her trouble, and the latter promised to make it the subject of his prayers and to interview the lad on some convenient occasion. The meeting took place eventually at the Visitation convent. It has been described, on oath, by M. Alexandre Chaillard, protonotary apostolic, who was present on the occasion. After mentioning his acquaintance with the children of M. Olier, he said: "On a certain Thursday I accompanied them, in order to go and hear Mass, celebrated in the little chapel of the daughters of the Visitation at Bellecour in Lyons, by the Right Reverend de Sales, Bishop of Geneva. Mme. Olier, their mother, was also present. After Holy Mass Mme. Olier took her children

* C. A. de S., l. x^me^, pp. 243 and 244 of vol. ii.

to present them to that illustrious prelate, in order that they might pay him their respects. He received them with fatherly affection, embraced them one after the other, and complimented her upon them in terms of equal praise. Whereupon Mme. Olier remarked: 'Jean Jacques, my Lord, is not well-behaved, but disobedient, and is so unruly in his conduct that his father and I have often reason to reprimand him.' Then the Saint, to console the mother's grief, replied: 'Ah, madame, there is need of a little patience. Do not be anxious, because in the person of this good child, God is preparing one who will be a great servant of the Church.' Then placing his hands on the boy's head, he kissed him affectionately, and gave him his blessing."* It is also recorded that the Bishop intended to take young Olier with him to Annecy, in order to preside himself over his education. It is through this incident between Francis and their Founder that the sons of Saint Sulpice have an intimate relation with the Saint of Annecy. M. Olier, in his panegyric of St Francis, afterwards said: "If I call him sometimes my father, it is because I was happy enough to receive his blessing and because it is thanks to his holy advice and counsel that I am now wearing the cassock."

Another instance of the Saint's prophetic vision is given both by Pérennès and Faillon. One day, when Francis had been preaching in the church of St Francis, a lady came forward and introduced to him Mlle. Françoise Monet, who, she said, desired to enter the Institute of the Visitation, but who was prevented from doing so by the fact that she had no dowry. "Françoise?" replied the Bishop. "Her name is the same as mine then. It occurs frequently in my family, for both my father and mother bore it. I am delighted to resemble so excellent a young lady even if only by name. You tell me that she is poor, but I assure you that God has riches enough for her." Then, addressing Mlle. Monet, he said: "My child, God destines you to be a Carmelite: I would willingly have received you in my convent at Annecy, but God wishes that you should be a daughter of the great St Teresa. Be patient for a little while: you will soon enter that Order and will become a good religious." Mlle. Monet, as a matter of fact, entered the Carmelite Order at Avignon not long afterwards, and eventually became well known for her sanctity under the name of Sister Françoise de St Joseph.†

In the early part of December Mother de Chantal had returned to Lyons from her visit to the convents of Montferrand and Saint Etienne. Except for the short interview in November she had not seen Francis de Sales for three years, and she was intensely anxious

* *Vie de M. Olier*, par M. Faillon, 1873, Tom. I, p. 11.

† Pérennès, vol. ii, p. 476. Also *Vie de M. Olier*, par Faillon, Tom. I, p. 13.

to speak with him about the needs of her soul and the government of the Visitation Institute. On December 11 she had a long interview with the Bishop. "Mother," said the latter, at the opening of this meeting, "we have several hours at our disposal. Which of us is to begin first?"—"I, if you please, father," she answered, with a slight touch of that impetuosity which had always been natural to her. "My soul is in such great need of your counsel."—"What, Mother?" answered Francis. "Are you still troubled with these ardent desires? I thought that by now I should have found you altogether angelic. Nay, we will speak about ourselves at Annecy: at present we will finish off the affairs of our congregation. O Mother, how I love this little Institute of ours; for I know that God is very much loved therein." Mother de Chantal, without the slightest murmur at this bitter disappointment, put away the paper on which she had noted down certain things concerning herself, and unfolded a memorandum about the business of the congregation. For four hours they discussed the various questions that needed settlement, and it was during this interview that they finally decided the policy of the Order as to the institution of a Mother General. Their ultimate verdict was against such an appointment. "The more I have thought and prayed about this matter, the more I have become convinced that it is God's will that the Institute should remain simply and solely under the guidance of the Holy See and the Bishops; for, look you, our daughters must be the daughters of the clergy."

It was natural that during this interview St Jane Frances de Chantal had been studying almost unconsciously every movement of her beloved spiritual father, each slightest gesture, each accent of his speech, each expression of his countenance, and she was filled with reverence and wonder at what she perceived. God often chooses that the outward bearing of his saints should reflect the beauty of the inner soul, and Mother de Chantal found this phenomenon markedly present in the person of Francis de Sales. His intense spirituality seemed to shine in his face, his sincerity and freedom from self-consciousness were visible in every gesture, his words breathed of nothing but his love of God and his children, and his judgement, given so surely, yet so calmly, was manifestly to her experienced perception the inspiration of the divine Spirit. At last she could no longer repress the expression of her veneration. "Father," she said, "I have no doubt but that one day you will be canonized, and I hope that I shall have my part in obtaining it."—"Mother," answered the Bishop gravely, "God might indeed work such a miracle, but those who will deal with my canonization are yet unborn."

A short time afterwards, in the midst of their discussion, Francis

suddenly became silent, apparently under the power of some dominating thought, and far removed in spirit from all that surrounded him. "Father," said Mother de Chantal, "you are in the presence of God."—"Why, mother," he answered smilingly, "you must not think you are the only one who is allowed to experience the presence of God. After all, is he not everywhere? And must we not be thinking of him always?"

Mother de Chantal desired to stay a short time longer in Lyons in order to have the benefit of the Bishop's counsels. But this he would not permit. He sent her away on a visitation of her houses—Grenoble, Valence, and Belley: afterwards she was to visit Chambéry for the founding of a convent in that city, and finally to return to Annecy. Accordingly, on the next day, December 12, she left Lyons on her way to Grenoble, in spite of the fact that the weather was extremely severe. Mother de Blonay, rendered anxious by the thought of this journey under such rigorous circumstances, communicated her fears to the Bishop. "Ah, my daughter," he replied, "who is there that is fonder of our mother than I am? I love her as I love myself, but she must needs do the will of God and go on to prepare a resting-place for me." For the moment the good Superioress failed to understand the meaning of these words, but afterwards she realized that he was speaking prophetically of his burial at Annecy.

On December 17 Francis wrote to Mme. de Toulongeon, Mother de Chantal's daughter, Françoise. "On my journey to Avignon," he said, "I had the happiness to find our good mother here, and I saw her again on my return. You may well imagine that we spoke often of you, and it gave me the greatest consolation to know that you ever live in the fear of God, with an ardent desire to advance in the path of virtue.

"You know well, dear daughter, how easy I am to satisfy and how ready I am to conceive the highest hopes of those whom I hold in affection, and it was from your very earliest childhood that I entertained an infinite desire for your spiritual welfare, and felt greatly confident that God would hold you in his hand, provided only that you corresponded with his favours. Do this then, I beg of you, dear daughter, and day after day defend your heart from every sort of vain amusement. As you know, I am by no means scrupulous, and I do not brand as idle or vain any amusements except that deliberate inclination entertained for things which actually distract our minds from those thoughts and considerations that we ought to have anent our holy eternity. . . . Although your age, constitution, and health all promise you a long life, remember nevertheless that you might also die in a short time, and that you will find nothing so desirable at the end as having taken the greatest care in accepting

and preserving the graces bestowed upon you by the divine goodness."*

In another letter, written to a lady two days later, we find his mind dwelling on the thought of death and the after life. "Happy are those," he writes, "who, freed from courts and their flatteries, live peacefully in saintly solitude at the foot of the Cross! Of a truth, I have ever had a poor opinion of vanity, but I find it much emptier still amidst the feeble grandeurs of the Court.

"My very dear daughter, the further I advance along the path of this mortality of ours, the more contemptible I find it, and ever do I find more loveable the holy eternity for which we long and for which alone we must love each other. Live only for that life, dear daughter, which alone merits the name of life, and in comparison with which the life of the great ones of this world is a very miserable death."†

In addition to his correspondence and his work for the Visitation, Francis was obliged to devote much attention to those who came to visit him for one purpose or another. The little lodge, in which he had taken up his quarters, was continually besieged by distinguished people, anxious to consult him—princes and princesses, learned theologians, noblemen, and prominent citizens of Lyons. It is known that Queen Marie de Médicis often came to the convent in order to interview Sister Marie de Valence, who was staying there at this time, and it is more than likely that on some of these occasions she called on our Saint. Often he was asked by friends to interest himself in the affairs of those who were in need of some favour or position, and one of the last letters which he wrote was a letter of intercession to the Duke of Bellegarde in favour of a client. But for all his intercourse with the great, he never forgot the poor. He gave to them whatever he could with that unbounded generosity which caused Canon Rolland such continual anxiety. When he had nothing of his own to give he became a beggar himself, and would appeal to the gentlemen and ladies of the Court to open their purses on behalf of his petitioners.

On December 24, at the request of Marie de Médicis, he preached and officiated at the erection of a cross for the Recollect fathers: during the whole of this function, which lasted for three hours, he remained bareheaded in the bitter weather, and it is certain that his health was then seriously affected by the cold, which he nevertheless endured with his usual uncomplaining fortitude.

At midnight he celebrated Mass in the Visitation chapel, gave Holy Communion to the sisters, and preached on the birth of our Lord with an eloquence that went to the hearts of his audience with

* E. N., Tom. XX, Lettre MCMLX, p. 393.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre MCMLXI, p. 395.

a strangely supernatural power. When he had taken off his vestments, Mother de Blonay came to the sacristy grill and asked him if he had not received some extraordinary grace during the Mass. "It seemed to me," she said, "that I saw the Archangel Gabriel by your side as you were intoning the *Gloria in excelsis*."—"My dear daughter," he replied, looking at her affectionately, "my heart is hard of hearing in the matter of inspirations: the angels must needs speak aloud to my very ears and impress on my senses the sound of their heavenly melody." But the Superior refused to be put off by this answer, and insisted in her questioning, so that the Bishop was forced to answer. "It is true," he said, "that never before have I received such great consolation at the altar: the divine Child was visible there and yet invisible. Why should not the angels be there also? But I will tell you no more: there are too many people around us."

From the house of the Visitation Francis went to hear the confessions of the Prince and Princess of Piedmont, and afterwards, as their Almoner, said the Mass of the Dawn in their presence and gave them Holy Communion at the Church of the Dominican fathers. Many other members of the Court were present. Amongst these was M. Robert Arnauld, brother of Mother Angélique. When Mass was over, he went into the sacristy to see the Bishop: the latter greeted him most affectionately, and, alluding to the Communion, which he had just received, said: "Ah, my son, I recognized you *in fractione panis*."

Leaving the Dominican church, Francis returned to the Visitation in order to say his third Mass. When he entered the sacristy, he found the chaplain, already vested, about to go to the altar. This priest immediately began to take off his chasuble, in order to give place to the Bishop, but the latter would not allow it. He protested that he was delighted to have a little time in which to recollect himself, and, going into the chapel, he stayed there motionless on his knees, whilst the chaplain said his three Masses in succession. It was only a short time before midday that Francis was able to go to the altar.

After dinner, at which, it was noticed, he ate very little, he presided over the clothing of two of the sisters, and preached on the text, drawn from the epistle of the first Christmas Mass—*Denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world.* Charles Auguste de Sales relates that this clothing was the fulfilment of a prophecy made to one of the sisters concerned, Marie Sylvie. Some time before, her parents had been negotiating in her interests an advantageous marriage, although she herself experienced naught but repugnance for the proposal, and was anxious to become a religious. In her distress of mind she went

one day to the church of the Capuchins and there besought our Lord and his Mother that they would obtain for her the fulfilment of her own desires. Suddenly, in the midst of her prayer, she found herself surrounded by a dazzling light, and our Lady appeared to her in vision, accompanied by two saints whom she knew, by inspiration, to be St Mary Magdalen and St Catherine of Siena. Then she heard a voice saying: "Courage, daughter, before long you will enter my Order of the Visitation, and will receive the habit at the hands of a saint." Thus was Francis de Sales canonized even before his death.*

At the conclusion of the ceremony the Bishop was persuaded to take a short repose, after which he gave a conference to the sisters. Then, as Marie de Médicis was leaving Lyons the next day, he went to pay her a farewell visit; it was not till late in the night that, worn out by his labours, he was able to retire to rest.

On the next day, the feast of St Stephen, he said Mass in the Visitation chapel and gave Holy Communion to the nuns. Afterwards he dined with one of his friends, M. Nicolas Ménard, Vicar General of the diocese of Lyons, with whom he had several important matters to discuss. At five o'clock he returned to the Visitation. "Good evening, my dear children," he said, as he entered the parlour, "I have come to say good-bye to you for the last time and to have a little talk with you, because the court and the world will take up the rest of my time. At length, my dear children, I have to leave you, and I have come here now for a last enjoyment of that consolation which I have always experienced in your company up to the present. What have we to talk about? Nothing very much, I doubt. It is true nevertheless that women have always plenty to say. But, my daughters, it is better to talk to God than to man."—"My Lord," was the answer, "we want to talk to you in order to learn how to talk to God."—"Well," he said, "we will let that serve as a pretext for our desires: and we will go straight to the point without preface of any sort." One of the first questions put to him was about the advisability of taking saintly people as models and imitating their virtues. In answering this, he said, amongst other things: "If you consider their virtues in the spirit of charity, in order to imitate them, you will be doing well. The virtues of God, as God, are so super-eminent that, in order to satisfy our weakness, he willed to become man, so as to give us an example of what we must do in a way that we could imitate. It is a good thing to consider and reflect upon the examples given by the saints in order to imitate them, but especially upon that example given by the King of Saints, our Lord and Redeemer. It is related that St Anthony passed the whole year of his noviciate in watching the

* C. A. de S., l. x^me, p. 245 of vol. ii.

virtues of his brothers, and that, just as a bee gathers honey from the flowers, so he gathered from each religious some virtue which he needed. The love of God is inseparable from the love of our neighbour. But better still is it ever to contemplate the virtues of our Lord."

Then, in answer to further questions, he spoke about the relations which should exist between the sisters and their Mother Superior, about ambitioning positions on the one hand and entertaining an unreasonable fear of responsibility on the other, about the spirit in which the tasks of the day should be undertaken, and about the difference between involuntary imperfections and deliberate venial sins. Sometimes, as in after-days, his maxims were misunderstood in a surprising manner. He was fond of giving the nuns, as a motto, the words : " Desire nothing, ask for nothing." One of the sisters said to him on this occasion. " You tell us, my Lord, that we are not to desire anything. But are we not to desire the love of God and humility ? For our Lord said : *Ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you.*" One can almost see the look of amused expostulation with which he made his answer. " O my dear daughter ! When I tell you to desire nothing and to ask for nothing, I am speaking of the things of earth. For as regards the virtues, these we can indeed implore. And when we ask for the love of God and for charity, we necessarily include humility and all other virtues, for they cannot be separated one from the other."

In speaking of confession he showed how clearly he saw through the little weaknesses and affectations of his penitents, even though he treated them with such gentleness and consideration. He said that we ought to go to confession with the main motive of becoming more closely united to God, that we should act therein in a spirit of simplicity and love. " There are four faults," he said, " not infrequently committed in confession. The first is to go to it rather for the purpose of obtaining relief and consolation than in order to please God and strengthen one's union with him. . . . The second is that people come in order to make beautiful speeches and show off their eloquence ; telling long stories in order to get themselves appreciated, and with their fine talk making a pretence of exaggerating their defects, whilst with regard to some great fault or serious sin, they will so confess it as to make it look very small : and in so doing they give the confessor no real knowledge as to the state of their souls. The third failing is that people make use of so much subtlety and disguise, that instead of accusing themselves they come rather to make excuses out of a spirit of self-love, fearing lest their faults be seen. The fourth fault is that there are some who delight in exaggerating their failings and out of some small sin make a very big one. Both these failings are very serious. How I wish that

people would tell things frankly and simply, just as they really are." Later on he gave a clear exposition of the difference between imperfections and venial sins, with rules as to the confession of the former. The subject of confession naturally led to that of Communion, and he answered a few questions on that important subject. Towards the end of the interview one of the sisters asked whether they ought to press their Superior to take some little extra comfort or nourishment, when they thought she needed it. He answered that if the Superior was known to be austere with herself, this should certainly be done, but not in the case of one who was inclined to favour herself. On this point he remarked, by way of illustration: "I must tell you that amongst all the saints that are in heaven there are very few who hit the bull's-eye of virtue. Some there were who went too far in the matter of austerity, and there were very few who kept themselves within the limits of holy moderation."

Then he touched on a misunderstanding which is very common amongst all classes of people, to wit, that feeling is essential to the validity of a religious act. "I have noticed in all our houses," he said, "that our sisters do not make a distinction between God and the feeling of God, between faith and the feeling of faith: which is a very great fault and an indication of ignorance. It seems to them that, when they do not feel God, they are not in his presence."

Finally he said: "We have nothing to desire except the union of our souls with God. Happy indeed are you who are living thus in religion, for your rules and all your duties continually direct you to that end. You have only to do, without occupying yourselves with desires."*

At this point he was informed that his servants had come with torches to escort him home. "I would willingly pass the whole night here," he said, "and never notice it. But obedience calls me away, and so I must leave you in God's name, my dear children."—"But first," answered the Superior, "tell us what you wish should be most deeply engraved upon our minds."—"My dear daughters," he said, "I have told you everything in those two words—*Desire nothing, refuse nothing.* Consider the Infant Jesus in the manger. He accepts poverty, nakedness, the companionship of animals, cold, the inclemency of the weather, and everything else which his heavenly Father allows to happen to him. We are not told that he ever stretched out his hands to his Mother's breasts, but left everything to her care and forethought. But neither did he refuse the little comforts which she gave to him. He accepted the services of St Joseph, the adoration of the kings and the shepherds, all with an equal surrendering of his own will. In the same way we also must desire nothing and refuse nothing, but suffer and receive whatever

* E. N., Tom. VI, p. 425.

God shall send us." After answering one more question, he took his leave and went back to his own humble lodging.

The next morning, while he was dressing, he said to his servants: "I notice that my eyesight is failing badly. That means that I have not long to live, for the weakness of my body is as a weight upon my soul. Nevertheless we shall go on living as long as God shall will." After going to confession, he said Mass with extraordinary fervour and gave Holy Communion to the sisters. Later on he heard Mother de Blonay's confession, and then had a short interview with her. It was evident to her that a great change had taken place in his health, and she asked him anxiously if he was feeling ill. He turned away her question by remarking that *all things co-operate unto good to them that love God*, and then, giving her his blessing, said: "Farewell, my child, I leave you my spirit and my heart."

On quitting the chapel, he met the Duke of Bellegarde, Governor of Burgundy, and M. de Villeroy, Governor of Lyons, and talked with each of them for a considerable time, standing bareheaded in the cold. With the Duke especially he had many matters to discuss, in connection with the country of Gex, the religious affairs of which were a source of perpetual anxiety, and he was continually urging the French government to give greater assistance to the Catholics in their struggle with Huguenot influence. He next paid a call upon the Duke of Nemours and Genevois, partly to take leave of him, but partly to intercede for others. For the Duke, having given credence to certain parties who had spoken against the officials of his duchy, was minded to cashier the latter. Francis, on this occasion, told the Prince the true state of affairs, and so convinced him of the loyalty of his officers that he renounced all idea of discharging them and confirmed them in their positions. The last visit of a tiring morning took the Saint to the apartments of the Prince of Piedmont, where he remained some time in conversation with Victor Amadeus, before taking his leave in view of his intended departure that afternoon.

Francis returned home utterly worn out. Germain Pilliod, his valet, thinking he would like to be quite ready for departure after his dinner, suggested that he might like to put on his riding-boots. "Put them on, if you like," said the Bishop, "but we are not likely to go far." He dined very lightly, and then remained for some time motionless and pensive, with his elbows resting on the table. This was so unlike his usual conduct that his people noticed it with misgiving. However, in a short time, he seemed to recover his strength, and devoted himself to writing two or three letters, which had been left over in the press of his engagements. But he was not destined to remain in peace for long. A number of people, hearing that he was about to leave Lyons, called at the little house in order to bid

him farewell and to ask for his blessing. Amongst these was Father Pierre Barnaud, the Rector of the Jesuits' house of St Joseph, who, on taking leave, begged the Bishop always to preserve his kindly interest in their community. "You must always be quite sure of this," replied Francis, "that I belong heart and soul to St Joseph." In striking contrast with his usual manner of treating his guests, the Bishop did not accompany them on this occasion to the door, but remained seated in his chair. Canon Rolland noticed this at once, and decided that Francis was in no condition for travelling. "My Lord," he said, "it is already late. It seems to me that it were better to defer our departure till to-morrow."—"You are thinking perhaps," replied his master, that I am ill." Nevertheless, he got up and went to his room, apparently with the intention of going to bed. While his valet, Pilliod, was attending to his wants, he chatted with him gently and asked him what he had heard in a sermon recently preached before the Queen. Pilliod answered that amongst other things the preacher had exhorted Her Majesty to hold her servants in great affection. Thereupon Francis said: "And you, Pilliod, do you love me well?" The good servant, full of foreboding for his beloved master's condition, found himself unable to answer, and the tears ran down his cheeks. "As for me," said the Bishop, "I love you greatly indeed. But we must love God most, who is master of all." With these words a sudden change came over him and he sank back unconscious. Giving the alarm, Germain Pilliod summoned Canon Rolland and the other members of the household. While the servants were attending to their master and putting him to bed, Canon Rolland went in search of a doctor, but at first was unable to find one. In his distress he betook himself to the house of the Jesuits and informed Father Barnaud of what had taken place. The latter, accompanied by Brother Guillaume Armand, hastened to the Bishop's room. In the meanwhile Francis had been seized with what was evidently an apoplectic stroke, and had partly lost the use and control of his limbs. The Rector of the Jesuits immediately devoted himself to easing the patient's condition in every possible manner, until the doctors arrived and took charge of the invalid. Eventually, being obliged to take his departure, he sent Father Gaspard Maniglier and another priest to the Bishop's assistance. By this time Francis had recovered consciousness, and was fully aware of all that was taking place around him. When Father Maniglier came to the bedside, he at once tried to rouse the Bishop as much as possible and engage him in conversation. "What is this, my Lord?" he said. "Only a short time ago I was saying good-bye to you, and now I find you in this condition. What does it all mean?"—"Father," answered the Bishop, "I am awaiting here the mercy of God." Then he added: "*With expectation I have*

waited for the Lord, and he was attentive to me." Then the priest asked him: "My Lord, tell me; if God had destined this hour to be that of your death, would you not unite yourself with his will and accept it patiently?"—"*It is good to trust in the Lord,*" was the answer. "It matters nothing to me whether it be this hour or another. *He is the Lord: let him do what is good in his sight,* and dispose of me as he wills. I would accept it all patiently." Then he asked the father to receive his profession of faith, and when this was done added: "However many religions there might be in the world—a hundred, nay, even a thousand—there is only one that I hold to be the true, and that is the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, in which I will to die, no matter what the enemies of my soul may suggest to me. Thus do I swear: such is my profession. And now, while we have the opportunity, I ask you to arrange for me to receive the holy sacrament of Extreme Unction." The doctors, however, decided that this was not for the moment necessary, and, obedient in all things to those who had charge of him, he gently submitted to their wishes. Throughout the whole of his last illness this remained his attitude, no matter how painful were the remedies applied to him and in spite of the fact that he himself felt them to be useless.

In the meanwhile Father Maniglier continued to suggest such prayers and thoughts as he considered helpful to the sick man. Amongst others he proposed the prayer of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemani: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* But the Saint in his humility would not use it, answering instead: "Let not my will be done, but thine only." Later on, when it was suggested that he should offer up his soul to the most Holy Trinity, he roused himself up and said in a strong voice: "I vow and consecrate all that is in me to God: my memory and my actions to God the Father; my understanding and my words to God the Son; my will and my thoughts to God the Holy Ghost; my heart, my body, my tongue, my senses, and all my pains to the sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, 'who for my sake did not refuse to be betrayed into the hands of evil-doers and to undergo the punishment of the Cross.'"

At this moment there arrived M. Nicolas Ménard, the parish priest of Saint Nizier, who came to ask Francis if he would like to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the chapel of the Visitation for his intention. He answered that he did not deserve such a favour. "But," said the curé, "do you not want people to pray for you?"—"Ah, that, certainly."—"Do you not remember the Blessed Virgin Mary, and will you not pray to her?"—"I have prayed to her every day of my life." On saying this he fell into a state of semi-consciousness. As far as we can see, the doctors had left orders that everything was to be done to prevent him from

sinking into a state of coma, and it was probably with this intention that his friends continued to question him and to try and rouse him from his lethargy. There is no other explanation for some of the things that were suggested to him at this moment. Thus M. Ménard now said to him : " My Lord, what do you think of the Catholic faith ? Could you perchance become a Huguenot ? " This succeeded in drawing from the Bishop a vehement protest. " Oh ! no, indeed ! God keep me from such a thing ! I was never a heretic." Then, making the sign of the cross, he said : " It would be too great a treason ! "—" But," said M. Ménard, " are you not afraid of death ? The greatest saints feared it, and surely they were right. *O death, how bitter is thy remembrance !* says the Scripture." —" *To a man that hath peace in his possessions*," added the Saint, completing the quotation and giving to it its real meaning, at the same time revealing his own indifference as to what should happen to him, provided it was the will of God. By this time the night was far advanced, and the doctors at length gave orders that the patient was to be left undisturbed. Nevertheless certain members of the religious orders watched by his bedside, of whom the majority were priests from the Society of Jesus, for which Order the Saint had always a special affection.

In the meanwhile, during the course of the afternoon, the news of the Bishop's illness had spread everywhere throughout the city. The Vicar General gave orders that the Blessed Sacrament should be exposed, and the people flocked to the churches to pray that God would spare the life of one whom they loved so dearly, and whose life was so valuable in the interests of the faith.

Towards midnight, however, it became evident that the malady was making rapid progress, and a messenger was sent to the parish church of Saint Michel, asking for the Holy Oils. M. Déage, one of the curates, hastened to the little house and prepared to administer the last rites. For the moment the Saint's strength, roused by the strong will within him, rallied in a marvellous manner ; he received Extreme Unction with great devotion, following the prayers and answering them with the fullest understanding. Then he made them pass his rosary on his arm, and lay quietly in a state of recollection and prayer. It had been impossible to give him Viaticum on account of the sickness, which from time to time assailed him.

The next morning, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, Francis was visited by Mgr. Berthelot, Bishop of Damascus.* " Brother

* " Eveque de Damas." The translator presumes this means *Damascus*, although as a titular see it was an archbishopric, according to the Cath. Encycl. Pérennès says that this bishop was the same who assisted at the Saint's consecration, but the names are different, so this is manifestly an error.

Francis," said the latter, "what an unexpected thing is this from the hand of God! Only on Christmas eve you came to bid me farewell and now I have to come and say farewell to you." Francis, looking at his friend, stretched out his hand. "I have come to help you," continued Mgr. Berthelot. "*A brother that is helped by a brother is like a strong city.*"—"*And the Lord shall save both,*" answered the Saint. Then, after a few moments, the Bishop of Damascus said: "*Cast thy care upon the Lord.*"—"*And he shall nourish thee,*" rejoined Francis: to which he shortly added: "*My meat is to do the will of my Father.*" It was in this way that he strengthened himself against the end, meditating texts of Scripture that came so readily to his mind. It is evident, moreover, that he valued the suggestions of his friends, and he asked M. Pernet, who was with him during the whole of his sickness, to keep on suggesting to him such passages of Holy Writ as would help him in his need. "*My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. The mercies of the Lord I shall sing for ever. When shall I come and appear before the face of God? Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday. I remembered God and was delighted.*"

Visitors continued to call at the house. M. Olier relates that he received the Saint's blessing on the day before the end, and historians say that Mme. Olier brought her children with her to receive the Bishop's blessing both for herself and for them. Father Fourier, his old friend and former confessor, also came about ten o'clock on the morning of the 28th, just after the invalid had been bled. "My Lord," he said, "do you know me? Do you remember me?"—"*If I forget thee, let my right hand be forgotten,*" was the answer. As Guillaume Armand, the Jesuit brother, who was well known for his skill in nursing the sick, was zealously carrying out his duties at the bedside, Francis looked at him affectionately and said: "Brother, you are taking a great deal of pains and trouble for my sake: how indeed shall I ever be able to repay you?"—"My Lord," said the brother, "pray for me and remember me when you come to the Kingdom of God." In the meanwhile Father Fourier continued to suggest short prayers to the sick man, and especially strove to make him repeat the well-known prayer of St Martin of Tours: "Lord, if I am still needed for the sake of thy people, I do not refuse to continue my labours." But again the Saint's humility forced him to refuse; all that he would say was: *I am an unprofitable servant,* and then in a low voice he added: *Inutilis, inutilis, inutilis.* Presently he was heard to say: *Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin;* whereupon one of those present asked him by way of consolation: "Why, my Lord, as to your conscience, have you not, with God's grace, set everything in good order?"—

" Alas," said the Saint humbly, " not so, not so." Father Amerés, a Jesuit priest, suggested to him the words *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts*, and Francis continued the quotation : *The heavens and the earth are full of the majesty of thy glory*, afterwards reciting the whole of the Te Deum. Then he said the psalm *Miserere*.

While these things were happening, news was carried to the Duke of Nemours that Francis de Sales was dying. Although the Prince was at the time confined to his bed by an attack of gout, he insisted on getting up, and gave orders for his carriage to take him to the gardener's house. On reaching the sick-room, he made his way to the Saint's bedside, and there, in spite of the pain which it caused him, knelt down on both knees and asked for Francis' blessing. " My Lord," said one of those present to the Bishop, " do you not recognize the Prince ? "—" Oh yes," was the answer, " it is my Lord the Duke of Nemours. I am his vassal." Then he gave his blessing to the Prince, both for himself and for his eldest son, whom he, the Bishop, had baptized in Paris in days gone by. When the Duke of Nemours had departed, Francis noticed that one of his servants was crying. Forgetting his own suffering, he tried to console him : " Do not cry, my son. Is it not right that God's will be done ? " Nor was this servant the only one who needed consolation. Canon Rolland, who, from those first days of Chablais down to these last moments, had served his master with a loyal, jealous, and, sometimes indeed, an exacting love, was now plunged in grief that moved the pity of all who saw him. Every moment he feared to see the end that was so manifestly near. " My Lord, my Lord, why do you not speak ? Say something to us."—" My son, live in peace and in the fear of God." Just as the Archbishop of Embrun came into the room, Francis had sunk into a state of lethargy, and this prelate and the nurses used every means—some, alas, too violent—to bring him back to consciousness. Presently he aroused himself once more and exclaimed in a strong voice : " *Lord, all my desire is before thee and my groaning is not hidden from thee.* . . . My God and my all. . . . My desire is *the desire of the everlasting hills.*" A short time afterwards one of his friends, thinking to rouse within him a desire for life, exclaimed : " My Lord, you must keep up your courage. Perchance with God's help we shall yet see you one day seated upon your throne of Geneva."—" I have never desired the throne of those of Geneva," he answered, " but only their salvation." His patience in suffering continued to be exemplary, the more so that much of his pain came from the well-intentioned but ignorant attempts of his attendants to prevent the inevitable, and could have been stopped by the slightest expression of his own wishes. This, however, was contrary to his life-long spirit of submission, and he continued to endure their ministrations in silence. Only when others spoke of

his suffering did he allude to it, and then only to belittle it. One of his friends, striving to help him, suggested that he should unite his pains in spirit with those of Jesus crowned with thorns. "Ah," he said, "what I am suffering does not deserve the name of suffering in comparison with those."

Unfortunately the doctors had by now decided to attempt the most drastic remedies. Their one idea remained to prevent the patient sinking into unconsciousness, and for this purpose they employed measures as barbarous as they were useless, the worst of which was the application of burning hot metal to the Saint's head and to the nape of his neck. He endured the torture with a martyr's patience, although it was so intense that the tears ran down his cheeks: yet his face lost nothing of its habitual serenity, and no word of suffering escaped his lips—only the gentle repetition of the names of Jesus and Mary. When one of the physicians asked him if he could feel what they were doing to him, he answered: "Oh yes, I can feel it, but continue to do all that you think fit."

The only result of these measures was to hasten the end, yet even then the strength of his will overcame his weakness in order to give answer to what was said to him. One of the out-sisters of the Visitation, who was in attendance upon him, thinking to give him consolation, told him that his brother, the Bishop of Chalcedon, had arrived in Lyons. "Sister," said Francis gently, "you ought never to tell a lie." When he was asked if he did not regret leaving his daughters of the Visitation and if he was not anxious about their welfare, he answered: "*Qui cœpit opus, ipse perficiet—perficiet—perficiet.* He who hath begun a good work will perfect it."

Father Philippe Malabaila, Provincial of the Feuillants of Piedmont, who was assisting the dying man in these last moments, continued to suggest short prayers to him. Suddenly, moved by some incomprehensible impulse, this good father asked the Bishop if he were not afraid of being overcome in his last combat against the evil one. The Saint's answer was once again a beautiful quotation from the Psalms. "*My eyes are ever towards the Lord,*" he replied, "*for he shall free my feet from the snare.*"—"But even amongst the Apostles was found one who was unfaithful," urged the Father Provincial. "*With expectation I have waited for the Lord,*" said the Saint, "*and he was attentive to me. And he heard my prayers and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs.*" Then once more he added: "*He who hath begun, will perfect.*"

A short time afterwards, he took M. Pernet by the hand and said: "Monsieur Pernet, *it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.*" Then he pronounced the holy name of Jesus. It was his last word.

The Provincial and his companions, seeing that death was near, knelt down and began the recitation of the prayers for the dying.

It was now close upon eight o'clock in the evening. When they came to the words, *All ye holy Innocents, pray for him*, they repeated this petition thrice because of the feast of the day, and it was while they were saying it for the third time, that Francis de Sales gently breathed his last and gave up his soul to God.

The fact of the Saint's death was communicated in a supernatural manner to those who loved him most dearly : to Louis de Sales, his brother, who was then at the château of La Thuille ; to Charles Auguste, his nephew, who was dangerously ill and who was cured in a moment by a vision of his uncle ; to St Jane Frances de Chantal, who, while at her prayers, distinctly heard repeated three times the words, *He is no more ;* to Sister Anne Jacqueline Coste, the lay-sister, whom Francis had ever held in such affection and esteem ; and to M. de Quoëx, the Prior of Talloires, to whom he appeared at the moment of the Commemoration of the Living during Mass.

As soon as the news of Francis' death was spread abroad throughout the city of Lyons, people hastened from all sides to the little house in the Visitation garden in order to venerate his remains and to obtain some kind of relic of one whom they immediately proclaimed as a saint. By order of M. Jacques Olier the body was opened and embalmed. His heart was carried by M. Ménard to the Visitation convent, where it was at first enclosed in a silver reliquary. Afterwards, when Louis XIII was cured of a dangerous malady by the application of this relic, he had it encased in a new setting of gold. The Saint's heart remained at Lyons until the time of the French Revolution, when it was carried to Venice, where it is still venerated in the Visitation house of that city. Other relics were distributed to Marie de Médicis, Anne of Austria, Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, and Prince Victor Amadeus, his son. To Princess Christine was allotted a ring. Many other objects which had belonged to Francis were given to various princes, noblemen, and religious people —all of which were preserved in costly reliquaries and treated from the first as the relics of a great saint.

On December 30 a solemn Requiem was celebrated in the Visitation chapel, and Dom Pierre de Saint Bernard, the Superior of the Feuillants, preached an eloquent panegyric. On every side was heard the word that Francis de Sales was a saint, and many compared him to St Ambrose, St Gregory, St Augustine, and other great doctors of the Church. In the meanwhile Canon Rolland had been making preparations to transport the Bishop's body to Annecy, and a litter, borne by mules, had already been requisitioned for this purpose. Just as the Canon and his friends were about to set out, however, M. Olier came forward and, in his official position as a city magistrate, forbade them to proceed with their plans. The people of Lyons were putting forward a claim that the body of the Saint,

who had died in their midst, ought to be buried in their city. It would seem that Canon Rolland was not altogether unprepared for such a procedure, and possibly had reason to expect it. We have seen on several occasions that he was not the meekest of men by nature, but for the moment he appears to have acted with the greatest calmness and dignity. Giving orders that the Bishop's body should be taken back to the chapel of the convent, he himself set out quietly for Annecy, confident in the justice of his cause.

In the meanwhile the people of Annecy were in a state of great anxiety. News had reached them of their beloved Bishop's illness. The Coadjutor at once issued orders that the Blessed Sacrament should be exposed in every church of the diocese, public prayers were offered up in the pro-cathedral, and the people came in crowds to pray for Francis de Sales. Then came the supernatural communications, which we have already mentioned, and people began to lose hope. Finally the arrival of a messenger from Lyons definitely confirmed their worst fears.

When Canon Rolland arrived in the city, he found all those who had the interests of religion at heart in the greatest grief. He immediately told the civic authorities of the refusal by the people of Lyons to allow him to bring back to Annecy the body of their beloved Bishop. Thereupon the will was read in public, by which it was made known that Francis de Sales had left to the members of his suite the disposal of his remains, in case of his death outside the diocese of Geneva ; and a letter was written to the Prince of Piedmont, asking him to use his influence in the matter with the King of France. There could scarcely be any doubt about the final result of these measures. Louis XIII, respecting the wishes of the dead Saint and recognizing the justice of the claims put forward by the people of Annecy, sent orders to Lyons that the Bishop's body was to be surrendered to their representatives. Janus de Sales, Janus Regard, Prior of Lovagny, and Canon Rolland hastened to Lyons. There was no further difficulty and they left that city on January 18, 1623, bearing with them the relics of their saintly pastor. The journey homewards was accomplished in four days : everywhere the funeral cortège was received with the greatest honour, the streets of town and village were lined with respectful crowds, and people crowded round the body to touch it with crucifixes, rosaries, and medals, which thus became so many relics of the saint. On January 22 the whole town of Annecy went out to meet the Bishop's body at the bridge of Isernon, whence it was conducted with every mark of honour to the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Here it was deposited upon the tomb of Blessed Andrew of Antioch. An immense crowd of the faithful visited the church during this lying-in-state, and several miraculous cures were recorded. Two days later

the body was removed thence to the pro-cathedral, where he Requiem was celebrated by the Bishop of Chalcedon, and a lengthy panegyric preached by Father Philibert de la Bonneville, Provincial of the Capuchins of Savoy. Finally, towards the evening, the last journey was made to the church of the Visitation, where the Saint's remains were placed in front of the choir grill upon a catafalque of white armozeen, until a tomb had been erected on the epistle side of the high altar. Later on, when the church was rebuilt in 1648, the body was placed in a side-chapel dedicated to the Holy Innocents. It was thither that kings, princes, and people of every class and condition came to venerate it, until the days when the French Revolution made every effort to drive religion from the country. The daughters of the Visitation were forced to seek refuge in exile, but they were determined to carry with them the relics of their Founders. Already these had been taken to the château of Duignt, when revolutionary soldiers, sent from Annecy, seized them by force and carried them back to the church of the First Monastery, whence they were shortly afterwards removed to the cathedral under the authority of the constitutional bishop.

But the good Catholics of Annecy, fearing lest the sacred relics of their Saints should be committed to the flames by some Jacobin mob, resolved to remove them secretly and put them in a place of safety. On a night in January, four daring citizens broke into the cathedral, took the relics of both saints from their reliquaries, enclosed them in two pine-wood cases, and hid them in a private house. The secret of their hiding-place was successfully guarded from the revolutionaries.

When the days of storm were ended, Mgr. Désolles, Bishop of Chambéry, came to Annecy and solemnly transported the relics of St Francis to the cathedral church of St Peter and those of St Jane Frances de Chantal to the former Dominican church of St Maurice. There they remained for twenty years, when, in August, 1826, they were once more removed by Mgr. de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, assisted by ten other prelates, to the church which Mgr. de Thiollaz, the new Bishop of Annecy, had recently built for the Visitandines to the north-west of the town. Charles Felix, King of Sardinia, and his Queen, Christine de Bourbon, who had generously supplied funds for the new church, were present on this occasion. On two later dates, the relics of St Francis were brought out from their resting-place to be honoured by the devotion of the people: the first in 1865, when the second centenary of the Saint's canonization was celebrated at Annecy; and the second, thirteen years later, when the title of Doctor of the Church had been added to his other glories by Pope Pius IX.

In a note, added to the last edition of M. Hamon's life of the

Saint, a further translation of the relics was foreshadowed. "At the moment when we are finishing this work," says the editor, "the Visitandines . . . are beginning the construction of a new monastery on the hill of the château." This new move was made necessary by certain building plans projected by the town council. It was in the year 1911 that the last translation of the relics took place, when, in the presence of many bishops and a vast concourse of the people, the sacred remains were transferred to the new church amidst unprecedented scenes of reverence and devotion.

There is little need to say more. It is hoped that from the foregoing pages the reader will be able to draw for himself a true picture of this great Saint. The worth of his life and of its spirit may be judged by the remarkable effect it continues to exercise over Catholic life. The Order of the Visitation, founded by him in conjunction with St Jane Frances de Chantal, still flourishes, and it must ever be remembered that one of the greatest religious movements of the Church's latest centuries—the revival of a great personal love of Jesus Christ in the devotion of the Sacred Heart—was due to the sanctity of St Margaret Mary, a spiritual daughter of these two saints. Other great men, acting under the spirit of St Francis, have founded congregations, which labour successfully to-day in the interests of religion under his name. The Missionary Fathers of St Francis de Sales, founded at Annecy, the Salesians, founded by Dom Bosco at Turin, and the Oblates of St Francis, instituted at Troyes by Father Brisson, are sufficiently well known to need no advertisement. It may be said of them that they are carrying the spirit of their patron into provinces towards which he had himself often cast longing eyes, but which the multiple occupations of his life prevented him from reaching in his own person and in his own day. As to his literary works, these are still being published in renewed editions and in many tongues, and, though they are three hundred years old and were written for a very different age, they still have power to charm the critic's mind, and, what is vital beyond compare, to turn hearts to a more faithful and loving service of Almighty God. "If this work be of men," said Gamaliel, "it will come to nought; but, if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it." The passing years have ratified—had it been needed—the canonization of the Church and have given their irrefutable evidence that Francis de Sales, his life, his spirit, and his work were of God.

EPILOGUE

Francis de Sales was beatified in 1661 by Pope Alexander VII, and was canonized in 1665 by the same Pontiff. He was proclaimed Doctor of the Church by Pius IX in 1877. These subjects will be dealt with more fully in a third volume, which we hope to give to the public in the future, and which will comprise a study of the Saint's most notable characteristics and other matters of interest.

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